Marxism Today

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CONFLICTS BETWEEN SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

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Editorial Comments

In this issue we look at a difficult but very important and topical problem for socialists —the question of conflict between socialist states. The invasion of Vietnam by China—together with the Cambodian events—brought this problem into sharp focus earlier this year, but, as we know, the problem goes back much further and finds its most important expression in the now long-running Sino-Soviet dispute.

This is, obviously, a worrying and disturbing problem for the Left. We have frequently argued in the past that the overthrow of capitalism would put an end to armed conflict between nation-states. It is clearly not that simple. At another level, conflict between socialist states can only benefit imperialism. For these reasons—and others —it is vital that we try and come to terms with and explain this problem.

We have based this issue—as will be clear from reading it—on a weekend seminar organised by the Communist Party's Theory and Ideology Committee on the theme of "Conflicts Between Socialist States" which was held in June. There are three main articles. Monty Johnstone looks at past attitudes towards this question, the approaches in traditional Marxist theory, how to explain the emergence of such conflicts and, specifically, the Sino-Soviet conflict.

Anthony Barnett, in "Inter-Communist Conflicts and Vietnam", examines the factors behind the conflicts which have broken out in South-East Asia, including the respective positions of Vietnam, China and Cambodia. Jack Woddis, finally, looks at the problem of "Nationalism and Internationalism" and how such questions have influenced and affected the relations between socialist states. In addition, we have also included a series of short discussion contributions based on interventions made during the course of the weekend seminar. These add further dimensions to our consideration of the problem.

It will be clear from reading this issue that this can only be regarded as a first "stab" at the problem. The questions are new, difficult and complex. There are no easy answers. And, as will be seen from reading this issue, there are varying approaches. We hope, however, that the material here will help focus attention on the question and contribute towards our understanding of it.

In the face of new and disturbing questions, it is sometimes perhaps tempting to ignore them, or at least accord them only a secondary significance. The problem is that they eventually catch up with you. However difficult, disturbing or even embarrassing the question, the responsibility of the Left is to confront it. It is in that spirit that we offer this issue of the journal, hoping that it will contribute to a larger international debate.

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Conflicts between Socialist States

Monty Johnstone

The armed conflicts that we have been witnessing in Indo-China in the last 18 months pose problems for Marxists as deeply disturbing and as radically challenging as Khrushchov's revelations about the Stalin regime at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956.

The 20th Congress knocked the bottom out of the assumption that proletarian revolution and the establishment of working class state power and a socialist economy of necessity eliminate undemocratic and autocratic rule and unwarranted mass repression. The outbreak of the war between the neighbouring socialist states of Vietnam and Kampuchea, followed this year by the Chinese invasion of Vietnam, demolished the assumption that socialism would *necessarily* eliminate war between states.

The specific circumstances of these tragic events will be analysed and debated in the next session. What I want to do here is to open up discussion on their implications for Marxist theory. Such a discussion should, I believe, take place in the spirit of Lenin, who expressed his agreement with Kautsky that "Marx's theory is not the last word in science" and emphasised that "history brings new facts and new methods of investigation that require the further development of the theory".[1]

Look for the Causes

The fact that, alongside valuable forms of co-operation between socialist states, there are also tensions and conflicts forces us to look for the causes and potential causes of these. To do so should not lead us to lose sight of the beneficial effects of mutual aid between socialist states or to forget that, without the assistance of the USSR in particular, countries like Cuba and Vietnam would never have been able so successfully to overcome the attempts of US imperialism to crush them.

However, our job today is to analyse the tensions and conflicts between socialist states which, if not adequately handled, can in extreme cases flare up into armed clashes and even war.

In the same way that Engels noted that war was waged before the emergence of classes "in revenge for injuries and to extend territory that had grown too small"[2], we can now see that the elimination of antagonistic classes is not *in itself* sufficient to exclude the possibility of armed conflict between states.

We must face the fact fairly and squarely that the claim that socialism would put an end to war always used to occupy a central place in both our theory and our propaganda. Emile Burns, in his oft-republished *Introduction to Marxism*, summed up the Marxist view as follows:

"When production and distribution in each country are organised on a socialist basis, there will be no group in any country which will have the slightest interest in conquering other countries. Socialist societies will not make war because there is nothing they, or any groups within them, can gain from war."[3]

We should in my view—and I am speaking self-critically—a long time ago have subjected these heart-warming but simplistic propositions to more rigorous empirical and analytical scrutiny.

Actually already 30 years ago, prompted by their own unhappy experience, the Yugoslav Communists began attempting to analyse conflicts between socialist states. Nearly 20 years ago the late Edvard Kardelj wrote his book *Socialism and War: a Survey of the Chinese Criticism of the Policy of Coexistence*. In it he spoke of the possibility "of some country on the socialist road—because of certain specific inner conditions—yielding to the temptation to make use of the strength of socialism, not only for its defence but also for an attempt to achieve certain aims which have no connection whatsoever with socialism".[4]

Kardelj's book called forth a virulent attack from *Pravda*, which wrote on September 1st, 1960:

"The apostle of Yugoslav revisionism declares unceremoniously that the founders of Marxism did not regard the victory of socialism in any country as an absolute obstacle to war. This is monstrous but it is a fact: Kardelj assumes that a socialist state may be a vehicle of a predatory war! Kardelj, to all intents and purposes, repeats the slander

[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1964), Vol. 4, p. 196.

[2] F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (London, 1946), p. 187.

[3] E. Burns, *Introduction to Marxism* (London, 1957), p. 52.

[4] E. Kardelj, *Socialism and War* (London, 1961), p. 60.

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about People's China and its 'aggressiveness' spread by American imperialism."

For years now, however, the Soviet press—headed by *Pravda*—have been attacking China for pursuing a "great power expansionist policy" and "preparing a new world war". Less tendentiously, it has this year correctly condemned as aggression the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. In so doing it has validated the assumption held to be so "monstrous" in Kardelj!

Are they Socialist?

Some comrades have asked in recent discussions on the Theory and Ideology Committee: "How can you designate as 'socialist' states in which autocratic governments trample democracy underfoot and/or engage in aggressive actions against their socialist neighbours? Since we say that for us socialism is a system with a higher form of democracy, how can we describe as 'socialist' states like—to take extreme examples—Stalin's Russia, the China of the 'Gang of Four' or Pol Pot's Kampuchea? Since we claim that socialism rejects aggression and respects national independence, how can we consider as socialist countries which undertake unprovoked invasions of others' territory?"

To these comrades I would say: Can you suggest a more adequate term which meets Marxist criteria? We have to be particularly careful to avoid an approach which characterises countries' social systems by whether or not we approve of what is going on there. This finds its crudest expression in the subjectivism of the Chinese leaders for whom the USSR changed from being Socialist to being "capitalist" and even "fascist" when their disagreement with its policies reached a certain point. (Yugoslavia, which was the first socialist state in the early sixties which the Chinese said had reverted to capitalism, has with the improvement of diplomatic relations again been elevated to the status of socialist.)

Marxists derive their *basic* social characterisation of a country from its property relations. All those that we have mentioned fall within the *broad* category of socialist states in terms of Lenin's definition of socialism as "the social ownership of the means of production and the distribution of products according to the amount of work performed by each individual".[5] I emphasise "broad", since within each of the socio-economic formations perceived by historical materialism there are enormous differences. Societies with a common economic base, whether capitalist or socialist, may and do have political superstructures widely contrasting in their degree of democracy, the peaceful or aggressive character of their foreign policy, etc.

Marx's great achievement was to turn socialism "from a Utopia into a science" (Engels). Before Marx Utopians had painted "fantastic pictures of future society" with their "proclamation of social harmony"[6], of a rational co-operative commonwealth without poverty or war. Everything that seemed desirable was associated with such a society, just as religious people associated everything they thought desirable with heaven, but no attention was given to the problems of its realisation.

Marx gave little time to describing the future society. He emphasised in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme* that socialism—"co-operative society based on common ownership of the means of production"—would be "in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges".[7]

Socialism for Marxists is emphatically not an ideal norm, and can never be expected to emerge in a pure state. The great mistake of dogmatic "Marxists"—actually a contradiction in terms—is to assume that, once public ownership of the means of production has been established, interests will necessarily be harmonised and conflicts disappear.

To define socialism on the basis of the ownership of the means of production does not in any way imply a lack of concern for achieving the great expansion of democracy and the elimination of war which form a crucial part of the Communist objective, as we emphasise in *The British Road to Socialism*. But it does mean recognising that under socialism also these things need to be worked for in their own right. They will not appear simply as a function of the new system.

I do not believe there is any contradiction between speaking of socialism as the *necessary* precondition for the fullest realisation of these aims and the acknowledgement that this potential is very far from being realised in many of the states of "real existing socialism". The undemocratic and nationalistic phenomena that we often see there, and against the danger of which we need to be prepared to struggle also in a socialist Britain, cannot be conjured out of existence by a verbal sleight of hand which refuses to accord the title socialism to any society in which they appear. This is an idealist approach. It is the method that Marx and Engels attacked in Hegel's *Phenomenology* "because it thinks it has overcome the *objective world*, the sensuously real world, by transforming it into a 'thing of thought' ". Hegel, they wrote, "stands the

[5] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1964), Vol. 24, pp. 84-85.

[6] K. Marx/F. Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1976), Vol. 6, pp. 515-6.

[7] K. Marx/F. Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow/London, 1950), Vol. 2, p. 21.

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world *on its head* and can therefore *in his head* also dissolve all limitations, which neverthless, of course, remain in existence *for evil sensuousness*, for *real* man".[8]

Contradictions Endemic to Socialism

The Statement of the Conference of 81 Communist Parties in 1960 declared that "there are no objective causes in the nature of the socialist system for contradictions and conflicts between peoples and states belonging to it".[9]

Such an approach runs counter to empirical evidence, as I shall attempt to show. It is also theoretically misconceived since, as Soviet writers have pointed out subsequently, it "puts the world socialist system outside the laws of dialectics and deprives it of its source of development".[10] Dialectics, as Lenin showed, is "the study of contradiction *in the very essence of objects*".[11]

Communist theoreticians in the 1970s have increasingly recognised "the fallacy of the contention that contradictions are always or mainly generated by the action of subjective factors. True, some mistakes may create contradictions, sometimes quite serious ones, but by and large the contradictions of socialism have an objective origin, that is, are not accidental and express a natural necessity".[12] Professor W. Wesolowski, of Warsaw, argues that "contradictions of interest among the working people of a socialised economy are endemic to that system". He speaks of a "structural contradiction of interests" under socialism, which "can be overcome only with the passage of this system, i.e. progress towards communism".[13]

This does not mean that, as under capitalism, these contradictions are antagonistic, i.e. that they express fundamentally irreconcilable interests which necessarily produce conflict. Lenin wrote: "Antagonism and contradiction are not at all one and the same thing. The former will disappear while the latter will remain under socialism".[14] At the same time there is now general agreement that where there are "grave errors of leadership, which overlook the appearance of real contradictions and tackle them belatedly", such contradictions may "assume an antagonistic character".[15]

An analysis of the conflicts between socialist states shows that they normally result from the aggravation and interaction of a number of contradictions which may be rooted in the economic, the political or the ideological sphere, or—perhaps most often—in all of these in varying degrees. In attempting to isolate out some of the factors involved, I must stress that I am not suggesting that particular conflicts can normally be reduced to one or other of them. This will become very clear when we come to examine the specific case of the Sino-Soviet dispute.

Economic Contradictions

Within socialist states, writes Professor G. Glezerman, of Moscow, "contradiction may arise between the general interest of the national economy and those of its various components—industries, enterprises, economic and administrative units. They can be harmonised on the principle of democratic centralism".[16] It is not difficult to appreciate that the contradictions of economic interests *between* socialist states will be that much greater given the fact that the economy of the socialist states is necessarily "based not on a single system of public ownership but on the socialist property of the independent owners of the means of production in the person of individual countries".[17] Moreover, of course, between socialist states no principle of democratic centralism operates to co-ordinate conflicting national interests.

Although socialism has done away with the well-known economic causes of war analysed by Lenin in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, it does not thereby eliminate all economic sources of conflict and, in extreme cases, war between nations.

The late Malcolm Caldwell last November made a strong case that economic factors were an important element in the conflict in Indo-China. "The issues at stake between Cambodia/Kampuchea and

[8] K. Marx/F. Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1975), Vol. 4, p. 192. Emphasis in original. (Slightly modified translation from Marx/Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 2, pp. 203-4.)

[9] *36 Million Communists Say* (London, 1960), p. 12. cf. R. Palme Dutt, *The Internationale* (London, 1964), p. 395: "The differences affecting the socialist countries . . . do not arise from any objective inevitable differences of interests, but are temporary subjective differences in the interpretation of those interests or of the most fruitful immediate steps in their fulfilment".

[10] *The World Socialist System and Anti-Communism* (Moscow, 1972), p. 137.

[11] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1961), Vol. 38, pp. 253-4. Emphasis in original.

[12] *World Marxist Review* (Prague/London), April 1973, p. 6.

[13] W. Wesolowski, *Classes, Strata and Power* (London, 1979), pp. 123-4.

[14] *Leninskii sbornik* (Moscow), XI, p. 357.

[15] *World Marxist Review*, April 1973, p. 7. cf. Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Works* (Peking, 1977), Vol. 5, p. 391: "In ordinary circumstances contradictions among the people are not antagonistic. But if they are not handled properly . . . antagonism may arise".

[16] *World Marxist Review*, March 1972, p. 36.

[17] V. S. Shevtsov, *National Sovereignty and the Soviet State* (Moscow, 1974), p. 158.

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Vietnam," he argued (at a time when the Pol Pot government was still in power in Pnom Penh), "are sufficiently objective, real, material and important to account for the willingness of both governments to go to war to assert their rights". These involved both ownership of offshore oil and control of water from the Mekong for the generation of hydro-electric power. On these matters, he claimed, the two socialist states had "diametrically and irreconcilably opposed interests. If the Vietnamese government has its way, the Vietnamese people would be better off and the Kampuchean people would be worse off. If the Kampuchean government has its way, the Kampuchean people would be better off, and the people of Vietnam would be worse off".[18] Certainly the conflict between Vietnam and Kampuchea cannot by a long chalk be reduced to these economic factors, on which the Indo-China specialists here may disagree with Caldwell on detail. However, I think that his general point merits attention in that it shows in principle how the objective interests of two socialist states may be opposed in respect of access to sources of energy, water and raw materials, which are recognised as an acute problem for the socialist countries. Indeed oil appears to be the crucial factor involved also in the dispute between China and Vietnam over the Spratly Islands, which also have strategic importance.

The question of unequal exchange between more and less developed countries can also be a source of tension, since the socialist countries base their trade with each other on world market prices, which (as Marx showed) favour those countries with a higher organic composition of capital. Following the break with Stalin in 1948, the Yugoslavs argued that they suffered "exploitation" in this form from the Soviet Union and other more developed socialist countries.[19]

The mixed joint-stock companies set up between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and China in the Stalin period, but dissolved after his death, also contained elements of economic inequality that were understandably resented.

The ability of a socialist state occupying a monopolistic or quasi-monopolistic position in the supply of an essential commodity to impose price increases is another potential source of bitterness. Such steps may be prompted by increasing extraction costs and/or in an attempt by that country to compensate for unfavourable terms and conditions encountered in its trading relations with capitalist countries.

The extent and conditions of technical and military assistance by the more developed countries may also be contested. Thus, in the early sixties, China protested in particular at Soviet military aid to India, with whom she had been involved in armed conflict, whilst in general feeling that Soviet aid going to non-socialist countries would be better given to socialist countries like herself.

Differences of national economic interest are reflected in the debates inside the Council of Mutual Economic Aid (Comecon), which embraces most of the socialist states (but not China) and fulfils an important role in the development and co-ordination of their economies. Since the early sixties differences have centred around the extent of integration and specialisation. Rumania has tenaciously resisted proposals which she has seen as entailing supranational powers for Comecon with consequent diminution of national sovereignty and the maintenance of less developed countries like herself in an inferior economic position by holding back their all-round industrial development. Rumania's more independent political positions developed out of her successful struggle for her national economic interests.

Political and Ideological Factors

In most conflicts between socialist states political and ideological factors have probably been of more direct importance than economic ones, although they have often gone together. Kardelj correctly pointed out that "the necessity for relationships between one socialist country and another to be founded on interstate relationships . . . makes possible tendencies towards a desire to dominate others, to national egoism and like phenomena".[20]

Marx and Engels, in *The Holy Family*, had written that "the egoism of the nation is the natural egoism of the general state system".[21] They did not foresee such a problem existing between socialist states. This was because they were living in the pre-imperialist era of capitalist expansion. Thus they wrote in the *Communist Manifesto:* "National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to vanish still faster. In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation

[18] *Race and Class* (London), Spring 1979, pp. 332 ff.

[19] See Milentije Popovic, *On Economic Relations among Socialist States* (London, 1950).

[20] Kardelj, *Socialism and War*, p. 189.

[21] Marx/Engels, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1975-79), Vol. 4, p. 119.

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vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end".[22]

Marx and Engels assumed at this time a socialist revolution as "the act of the dominant peoples 'all at once' and simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with them".[23] It was in that context that Engels wrote in 1847: "The peoples of those nations which join themselves together on the principle of common ownership will be compelled by this very union to mingle and to merge with one another and thereby to abolish themselves in the same way as the various differences between classes and estates disappear as a result of the elimination of their foundation—private property".[24]

Marx and Engels presupposed the victory of the socialist revolution taking place first of all in the capitalist countries of Western Europe in which, when they were writing these passages, the tendency towards breaking down national differences and the basis for national states appeared to predominate. As we know, things were to develop differently.

Already at the end of Marx' and Engels' lives there was asserting itself an opposite nationalist trend, which was to come to full fruition in the stage of imperialism and with the outbreak of the first World War. On the basis of his analysis of the new position and his conclusion in 1915 that "uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism", Lenin revised the early Marxian thesis. In his article against advancing the slogan "For a United States of Europe", he wrote that "the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country alone", which would on their own have to carry through "expropriating the capitalists and organising their own socialist production".[25]

It is a matter of history that this was precisely what was to happen with the great Russian Revolution of October 1917. Trotskyist journals have recently been publishing articles on the present conflicts between socialist states blaming them—somewhat predictably—on the theory of socialism in one country. They fail to take account of the actual possibilities open to the Soviet Union when it found itself alone after the revolutionary wave at the end of the first World War had receded. The decision to build "socialism in one country" was taken not because it was deemed preferable to building it in many countries in co-operation—the opposite was made abundantly clear by all those who participated in the debates on this question—but because there was at that time only one workers' state in existence in which to build it.

The Soviet Union had no alternative until such time as the revolution spread to other countries—and Lenin always stressed that it could not voluntaristically be called forth—other than to build socialism within its own state boundaries starting from, and overcoming, its low level of economic development. In so doing it was forced to operate as a nation-state with recourse to much of the panoply of traditional bourgeois states in its relations with other countries in the fields of foreign policy, diplomacy, trade, defence and intelligence.

There can be no doubt that elements of national egoism displaced in part the internationalism of the Leninist period and found expression in state policies and actions. Traditional big power practices, taken over and developed by Stalin and Molotov initially in their dealings with capitalist states, were unjustifiably carried over into relations with the nations that were to embark on the construction of socialism after the second World War. This was reflected already in 1948 in the Soviet Union's clash with Yugoslavia which, as John Gollan pointed out, "arose out of Yugoslavia's assertion of its independent right to develop its socialism in its own way".[26]

This does not mean, as the Italian Trotskyist theoretician Livio Maitan claims, that the solution lies in attacking the building of socialism within the framework of the national state and calling for "an international economic unity which involves from the start the breaking down of existing national limits".[27] Maitan's Utopianism contrasts with the realism of Lenin who recognised that "national and state distinctions . . . will continue to exist for a very long time to come, even after the dictatorship of the proletariat has been established on a world-wide scale".[28] A failure to respect these national and state distinctions has contributed a great deal to the "centrifugal tendency among the socialist states" and the "revival of nationalism" about which Togliatti expressed concern in his Yalta Memorandum of 1964.[29]

[22] *ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 503.

[23] *ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 49. cf. *Communist Manifesto:* "United action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat". At the same time the *Manifesto* recognised that "though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own buorgeoisie". (*ibid.*, Vol. 6, pp. 503, 495.)

[24] F. Engels, "Draft of a Communist Credo", *Marxism Today*, January 1971, p. 29.

[25] Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1964), Vol. 21, p. 342.

[26] *Marxism Today*, January 1976, p. 26.

[27] *Socialist Challenge* (London), March 15, 1979.

[28] Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1966), Vol. 31, p. 92.

[29] *Comment* (London), September 26, 1964, p. 618.

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Dominant Nation Policy

In its statement of October 30, 1956, the Soviet government acknowledged "violations and mistakes which belittled the principle of equal rights in the relations between the socialist states".[30] The Soviet press was to write of the harm done in this sphere "by Stalin's anti-democratic and essentially anti-socialist practices". It recognised that "abusing his power within the country, Stalin tried unceremonious domineering in relation to other countries too. As action produces reaction, so Stalin's dominant-nation policy quickened and intensified nationalist prejudice".[31]

Although Stalin's "cult of personality" and his bullying of other countries were denounced, the Soviet-led five-power intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 constituted a violation of the principle of equality between socialist states as grave as any action of Stalin's. It was prompted, in my view, by the desire of the Soviet leaders, in the first place, to stop the process of socialist democratisation being carried through on the initiative of the Czechoslovak Communist Party which it regarded as harmful and potentially infectious.

Marxists have in the past greatly underestimated the role of nationalism within socialist countries. It is a particularly powerful force in countries like China and the Indo-Chinese states which are just emerging to full and independent nationhood from a colonial and semi-colonial past and where a socialist system was rapidly established after anti-imperialist struggles with a predominantly nationalist content. The legitimate expression of national identity and pride has often been accompanied by a revival of traditional national enmities, resentments and sensitivities. The problem of state boundaries inherited from pre-socialist times is often complicated by the presence of national minorities which these borders separate from the country of their ethnic origins. The danger exists of a socialist state developing hegemonistic ambitions to dominate areas over which it ruled in earlier historical periods. There are some indications that such considerations play a role in Chinese foreign policy and perspectives.

Where the state is autocratically controlled by a small ruling group (which may be involved in internal power struggles), there is always a possibility of its using nationalism or even war as a means of diverting political and social discontent into hatred against alleged wrongs inflicted or threatened by "hereditary enemies" across the border. This would seem to have been an important element in the behaviour of the Pol Pot regime against Vietnam. Bellicose actions are especially possible in states where the armed forces play a dominant role or at least act as a powerful pressure group. In socialist societies also the military have their own functional interests which can represent a danger if not subordinated to democratic control.

Political and ideological disputes can assume their own momentum and escalate into bitter conflicts between states, especially if reinforced by dogmatism and fanaticism and a slanted presentation of the views and actions of the other side with whose position the people are prevented from acquainting themselves at first hand.

A major source of differences in a world divided between capitalist and socialist states concerns the question of the political, diplomatic and military policies to be adopted by the latter in relation to the imperialist powers. As we shall see, this has been at the heart of the Sino-Soviet dispute. It is also today an issue between Rumania and other countries of the Warsaw Pact.

A fear of the consequences for the international balance of forces and for world peace of a socialist country leaving the socialist camp at a particular juncture may also produce conflict, and lay behind the Soviet intervention in Hungary in 1956.

The Sino-Soviet Dispute

The dispute between the world's two largest socialist states has now been raging for nearly two decades. Its roots, of course, go back much further. It reached its worst point in 1969 when it produced armed clashes with tragic loss of life on the Ussuri River. In recent years China has publicly taken the utterly indefensible position that the Soviet Unio n is the main enemy of world peace. She has sought to conclude agreements with the USA and Japan, in particular, directed against the Soviet Union, and has aligned herself with the most reactionary elements in the capitalist world against detente with the Soviet Union dubbed as "appeasement of social-imperialism".

The causes of the dispute are highly complex and entangled and deserve more detailed examination than can be given here. They comprise many of the potential ingredients of conflict between socialist states to which I have been referring. The dispute has gone through many phases. If in the early sixties it appeared primarily in the form of an ideological controversy between Communist Parties, it has for the last 15 years been played out on the plane of the inter-state relations of two world powers. Their common profession of Marxism-Leninism has throughout this period had no more effect on those continuously hostile relations than a common commitment to Christianity has in the past helped to check conflicts between Western powers.

Paradoxically we find that whereas in the earlier period it was Soviet rapprochement with the USA—not, it should be said, directed against China—that

[30] *Soviet News* (London), October 31, 1956.

[31] *Izvestia* (Moscow), May 30, 1964.

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was the major element fuelling the controversy, today Chinese rapprochement with the USA and Japan directed precisely against the Soviet Union is a major source of discord.

When the Chinese Communists came to power in 1949, they had behind them a history of somewhat chequered relations with the Soviet Communist Party dating back to the 1920s. Nor was Mao to forget that "at the time of the War of Liberation, Stalin first enjoined us not to press on with the revolution".[32] After the Chinese Communists had nevertheless carried on and won their great revolutionary victory, Mao went to Moscow in December 1949 hoping to come back after a few weeks with a treaty and assistance. Things started none too auspiciously. Mao was later to recall: "We had to go through another struggle. Stalin was not willing to sign a treaty. It took two months of negotiations to get him to do so".[33] By hard bargaining Mao obtained under the Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance a limited loan of 300 million dollars and a Soviet agreement later to return Chinese property and territory taken from the Japanese at the end of the war. In return he had to accept the setting up of mixed joint-stock Sino-Soviet companies for the exploitation of Sinkiang's oil and mineral resources.

Whilst China was benefiting from Soviet economic, technical and military assistance, resentments were already smouldering during this period arising from the feeling that the Soviets were looking on their great country as a junior partner and expecting her uncritically to copy them.

After Stalin's death the new Soviet leadership quickly acted to increase the scale and quality of their aid to the Chinese, who were publicly to recognise its great importance for their programme of socialist industrialisation. In addition, in 1954, the mixed companies were dissolved and their property passed into exclusively Chinese hands. However, the Chinese leadership was critical of the extent and manner of the denunciation of Stalin approved by the 20th Congress of the CPSU as well as of the congress's thesis on peaceful roads to socialism, which they viewed through the prism of their own particular experience.

Background to Chinese Challenge

The immediate background to the formulation of a comprehensive challenge to the ideological and political positions of the CPSU which the Chinese would launch in 1960 lay in events that took place the previous year in the sphere of state relations.

Firstly there was apparently a refusal by the Soviet government on June 20, 1959, to provide China with a sample of an atomic bomb and technical data for its manufacture, which the Chinese were to claim the Soviet Union had agreed to do on October 15, 1957. China's resentment was understandable, but so was the Soviet government's concern with the greater risks of war that this could have entailed, as well as with the likelihood that it would make it more difficult to reach an agreement to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Then there was the neutral position taken by the Tass statement of September 7, 1959, on the Sino-Indian border fighting, on which it expressed its regret. The Chinese considered that the solidarity of socialist countries entailed a public expression of support for her action against India, rather than putting her on the same plane as her capitalist antagonist. Finally there were the Camp David talks between Khrushchov and Eisenhower later that month, and Khrushchov's public statements around that time which were seen as indicating that the Soviet Union was "going soft" on US imperialism. The Chinese particularly resented as an open accusation of aggressiveness Khrushchov's attack in Peking on his way back from America on those who wanted "to test by force the stability of the capitalist system".

The following April, on the 90th anniversary of Lenin's birth and on the eve of the Khrushchov-Eisenhower summit meeting in Paris, *Long Live Leninism* was published. Without naming names, it outlined distinctive Chinese positions—opposed to those of the CPSU and most other Communist Parties including the British—on a whole range of vital questions: peaceful coexistence, the inevitability of war, the effects of nuclear war, the world revolutionary process and the possibility of peaceful transition to socialism.

It is not at all surprising that the widely different stages of political, economic and social development and military power, as well as the contrasting positions occupied internationally by China and the Soviet Union, should have expressed themselves in different political positions on a whole range of issues. The policies of the Chinese Communist Party at this time above all reflected China's position as a new revolutionary state, excluded from the United Nations Organisation, with the US Seventh Fleet off her shores, and her economy affected by an American-imposed trade embargo. She was increasingly fearful of a deal made at her expense by the Soviet Union in its own state interests as an established great power. Moreover the Chinese Communists' remarkable revolutionary successes had fostered an extreme voluntarism reflected internally in the "Great Leap Forward" launched in 1958 and externally in an underestimation of US imperialism and the effects of nuclear weapons, which were described as "paper tigers". (The Russians had to remind them these creatures had nuclear teeth!)

[32] Mao, *Selected Works*, Vol. 5, p. 304.

[33] *Mao Tse-Tung Unrehearsed* (London, 1974), p. 191.

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What was so fatal and indefensible was that legitimate differences of political estimate should have led, not to rational argument, but to increasing abuse and hostility from both sides. This was soon carried over into the field of interstate economic relations with the sudden withdrawal of the 1,300 Soviet technicians with their blueprints. Soviet resentment at its technicians being exposed to Chinese criticisms of the CPSU cannot justify such a step, which did great economic damage and caused enormous bitterness towards the Soviet Union. So did the withdrawal a year later of the Soviet technicians from Albania, which had sided with the Chinese, and Moscow's severing diplomatic relations with her. (It is sad that the Chinese last year saw fit to withdraw their technicians in exactly the same way from Vietnam and Albania.)

Only one view acceptable . . .

An attempt to paper over the cracks at the conference of the 81 Communist Parties at the end of 1960 by adopting a long common statement was short-lived in its effects. Sino-Soviet relations soon flared up with even greater acrimony and intolerance on both the Party and the state planes. Both the Soviet and the Chinese leaderships enjoyed unchallenged power in their own countries and each believed that there could only be one Communist view worth serious consideration and discussion—its own. This dogmatic rigidity is not a consequence of Marxism, as its critics allege, but of the tradition of Stalinist monolithism in which both leaderships had been nurtured and which is far removed from the outlook and practice of Marx and Lenin. If the Chinese were to become the more virulent of the two in the wild fanaticism of their Cultural Revolution, Soviet attacks on China have not been lacking in abuse nor in exaggerations and distortions of the latter's positions. Moreover during the phase of the ideological struggle in the first half of the 1960s the Soviet public were denied the possibility of reading most of the Chinese statements, whereas the Soviet ones were made available to the Chinese public. Already in 1960 the Chinese Russian-language magazine was closed down by the Soviet authorities, whilst the American one continued to be published and distributed in the Soviet Union.

Both sides have a responsibility for the blood shed in 1969 around a disputed small and uninhabited island on the Ussuri River. Both sides exalted the readiness of their young soldiers to kill and to die allegedly in defence of the borders of their socialist fatherlands against "intrusion" from the "Red Tsars" and the "Maoist warmongers" respectively. Nationalist passions on both sides were whipped up to an extraordinary degree against the socialist state on the other side of the border which only a few years before had been called the frontier of friendship. It should however be noted, on the positive side, that both states have been careful to ensure that there has been no recurrence of these senseless clashes.

The next year both sides were to hold great celebrations for the centenary of the birth of Lenin, of whose mantle each claimed to be the worthy heir against the apostacy of the other. In their self-righteous fervour, however, each had ignored Lenin's insistence that "the question of the demarcation of frontiers now, for the time being—for we are striving towards the complete abolition of frontiers—is a minor one, it is not fundamental or important".[34]

We have seen how ideological and political differences, reflecting different objective conditions and experiences have degenerated into a deep, bitter and longlasting conflict between states. Nationalistic sentiments and suspicions have been stirred up and, on the Chinese side, traditional resentments related to Tsarist conquests of Chinese territory have come into play against the Russians. The escalation of these differences to the present position illustrates just how far such a dispute can assume a momentum of its own and how deep the springs of nationalism can run even after the bases of socialism have been laid.

Conclusions

I have endeavoured to show that the conflicts that we have been witnessing between socialist states are not events either inexplicable or to be explained only in terms of demonology associated with one or other of the parties involved.

As the socialist states continue to develop and to grow in number, we can expect that the complexity and range of differences between them will also magnify. They stem from the kind of objective contradictions that we have examined, as well as the subjective contradictions to which Lenin pointed as arising from the persistence of selfish "attempts to ride on the backs of others" as well as of "national antipathies (which) will not disappear so quickly". The working class, he pointed out, "will not become holy and immune from errors and weaknesses merely by virtue of the fact that it has carried out the social revolution".[35]

What is needed is to create the conditions and structures for recognising, debating and peacefully resolving these contradictions. There is no necessary reason why they should lead to armed conflict, for the long-term interest of socialist countries in mutual co-operation outweighs any advantages to

[34] Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow/London, 1965), Vol. 30, p. 293.

[35] Lenin, *Collected Works* (New York/London, 1942), Vol. XIX, p. 299.

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be gained by pushing the pursuit of particular interests to the point of military action.

The conscious fostering of an internationalist outlook, which is vitally necessary at all stages, entails recognising and respecting the existence among socialist states of a pluralism of viewpoints and interests as a long-term phenomenon. It also requires unrestricted contacts among their peoples, the free circulation of information and opinions and channels for their public discussion, along with the renunciation in practice of any attempt to settle differences by force or the threat of force.

Discussion

Stephen Sedley

If it is true that socialism ends war, war between socialist states is a contradiction in terms. Such wars, if they occur, therefore throw up a major problem of history and theory: either the notion that socialism ends war is false, or the states involved are not socialist. There is no third way, unless we are prepared to reconsider our political language and to examine how far we have been guilty of adjusting reality to correspond with an unscientific version of marxist theory.

It is fundamental to any concept of socialism that it is a form of society which does not solve its problems by resort to war. We are justified in making that proposition part of the definition of what we aim to build. What then is wrong with the socialism of those socialist states which have gone to war with each other? You can evade the problem as some Trotskyites do by proposing a utopian definition of socialism and then denying that there are any socialist states.

There is, however, another utopianism which has distorted our use of the word socialism and which can propel us into unreal arguments about whether this or that state is socialist. This is the still common idea that the brand of socialism is placed by revolution once and for all on the brow of a state: that socialism is a condition or a commitment, not a process. Once that view is adopted—as it often silently is—you can only explain conflicts between socialist states by denying the right of one of them to be called socialist. I do not say that every state is socialist which claims to be; but I say that arguments which seek simply to distribute or deny seals of approval to countries professing socialism are arid, undialectical and a fetter on our political understanding. They are a durable legacy of our less admirable political past.

There is a sort of graph of class struggle that has been etched into the political consciousness of more than one generation of marxists. It shows an uphill gradient during the period of capitalism's final crisis; a series of sharp ups and downs while state power is taken and consolidated by the working class; and then a steady downhill run through reconstruction to peace and plenty. Everything following the short sharp transitional period is called socialism: it differs from communism only in the proportion of social effort to social benefit.

It is understandable that the early propagandists of marxist socialism should have used such an image, but it is a reproach to our movement that more than sixty years after the first socialist revolution we are still trying to accommodate the shock of realising that that is not how it's going to be. Although as a Party we have increasingly recognised that socialist societies face fundamental structural problems and are shaken by profound conflicts, our analysis and our theory have not properly comprehended them. In part this has to do with the resistance put up by an element in the party that will not acknowledge the problems in any but a token manner; but more importantly it has to do with a reluctance at many levels to exchange the propagandist value of socialism as an image of peace and prosperity for the harder call to climb from one plane of bitter epoch-making struggle on to another.

Plurality of Socialisms

Although the eternity and unevenness of change ought to have alerted us long ago to the likelihood of conflicts of interest between states in which the working class had taken power, it remains our business to insist that to resolve such conflicts by war is to fall short of the standards which can properly be demanded of a socialist society. As I have argued, to solve the question by simply withdrawing the title of socialist from one of the combatants is to make the old mechanistic error of supposing socialism to be a once-for-all event, the turning of the final corner. What has to be recognised is that there is and will increasingly be in the world a plurality of socialisms, some very much more advanced than others and each differing in its character and in some of its interests from the rest.

What is to be the touchstone of these socialisms?

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I reject the idea that it is simply whether the means of production are socially owned or controlled. The un-socialist possibilities of such a test are as amply illustrated by the character of nationalisation in Britain as by the dangerous results elsewhere of equating working-class with Party and Party with state: both have resulted in denials of democratic participation which are the reverse of socialism. Other tests—for example, whether the working class holds political power—might be sound if they did not beg so many questions. It is perhaps more historically and politically honest, even if less rigidly tidy, to recognise states for what they are rather than to see how they measure up to a preconceived yardstick.

However wide socialist pluralism can go, there is a basic content without which a state cannot be regarded as socialist. It is a content which goes beyond the organisation of relations of production: it can be characterised as an ethical or moral or humanistic or democratic content, but it remains the same thing as the Leveller John Warr envisaged: "a spirit of understanding big with freedom and having a single respect to people's rights". To characterise states as socialist simply by reference to their economic organisation, in the same way as we characterise capitalist states, both ignores the humanistic aspect of socialism and makes the deterministic error of regarding economic power not as a precondition but as if it were itself socialism or at least an automatic progenitor of socialism.

Declining to issue seals of approval according to some political window test does not therefore mean abandoning the right to make sometimes painful judgments about the level and standard of socialism practised by different states. We know well enough, for a start, that the adoption of the title "socialist" is no guarantee of a state's political character. It is of great importance to our own position in Britain that we should be able to discuss without resort to simple formulae whether, for example, a relatively egalitarian society such as China can be characterised as socialist when it gives diplomatic and military support to some of the most reactionary elements in the world; or whether a regime as oppressive as that of Pol Pot can ever be called socialist. We need to be able to ask without undue passion *how* socialist these and other states are, from the Soviet Union to Mozambique. Far from shaking the foundations of the Communist movement such questions offer its principal chance of future growth.

If the problem of conflict between socialist states enables us to recognise both the endurance of conflict under socialism and the tenuous or imperfect character of the socialisms which can clash in this way, the appraisal of it may give greater realism to the struggle for socialism in our own country. Above all it may help put paid to the unspoken idea that with a socialist revolution not only capitalism but the process of history come to a stop.

Fred Halliday

The outbreak of war between revolutionary states in the Far East has drawn attention, and rightly so, to the survival after revolutions of economic and political factors that socialists had long thought would disappear with the overthrow of capitalism. Among these factors, discussed in Monty Johnstone's analysis, can be included such forces as national rivalry, disputed boundaries, competition for raw materials, and straightforward competition for regional influence. And the conclusion drawn, again rightly, is that these continuing causes of war between states and nations must force socialists to revise the theory through which such societies are to be analysed.

Yet, whilst this is a necessary revision, there is a sense in which the reappraisal must be taken further: for there are ways in which it is not only economic and political factors, but the very theory itself which has constituted an obstacle to the peaceful resolution of such conflicts and in which the theory has come to be one of the factors that leads towards the outbreak of war between revolutionary states. The very belief in the inconceivability, the impossibility, of war between such countries has made it more difficult to take the political steps needed to prevent war and has thereby made war more likely. If we are adequately to understand what has been happening in Indo-China, on the Ussuri River, or, with states of a rather different kind, in the Horn of Africa, it is important to study the ways in which the political assumptions have compounded the more readily identifiable politico-economic factors. The following points, by no means adequately worked through, are intended to suggest some lines along which such a revision could go.

Foreign Relations

1. Revolutionary socialists have come only belatedly to accept the need for a practice of foreign relations as such, when this is understood as diplomatic relations between separate states. The founders of historical materialism did not have occasion to address themselves to issues of this kind, given the fact that no prospect of socialist states existing was

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before them, and for a long time prior to the Russian revolution, socialists anticipated the overthrow of capitalism as a unified, cataclysmic process leading to the constitution of a new revolutionary regime on a world scale. The problem of the survival of capitalism, indeed its ominously healthy continuation, in much of the world was not initially foreseen, nor was the fact of the continued existence of separate post-revolutionary states. The first Commissar of Foreign Relations in the Bolshevik government, Leon Trotsky, was probably speaking for all his Bolshevik colleagues when he stated that his task was to "issue a few declarations" and then close the Ministry down. The call for "an end to secret diplomacy" that echoes through more than a hundred years of socialist propaganda has a similarly optimistic, but somewhat unreal, character. The result is that whereas capitalist states have a clear language and code for conducting foreign relations, post-capitalist states, even today, have trouble in clearly articulating the fact that, as states, they have specific interests distinct from the general well-being of mankind and similar generic if positive considerations. Yet as long as separate states exist and that will, at the very least, be for a long time, foreign relations must be seen as a distinct and necessary branch of international political practice.

2. Throughout its history the international socialist movement has laid great emphasis on the need for peace: whilst not "pacifist" in the sense of refusing to employ any force, it has been so in the sense that socialists have campaigned against wars and against policies seen as contributing to them—for example, arms production and the maintainence of large standing armies. This was so prior to World War I and became even more so in the aftermath of that war which was construed as a product of capitalist rivalry. The 1930s, with the campaigns against fascist aggression in Manchuria, Ethiopia and Spain, and the 1950s, with the campaigns against US aggression in Korea and for nuclear disarmament, confirmed this trend. Subsequently the rise of national liberation movements has introduced an alternative emphasis on the possibilities of national liberation through guerrilla struggle. Yet although no longer such a central issue of political propaganda in the way it was in previous decades this pacifist tradition has left its mark in the continuing belief that socialism means, automatically, the end of war. If this is the case, then there is no need to concern oneself about what needs to be done to avoid wars between post-capitalist states.

Discussing Relations

3. One of the consequences of this inability to envisage such conflicts is the absence within the post-revolutionary states of any adequate system for resolving disputes and, even mildly, of legitimately and calmly voicing public disagreements between states. The capitalist countries can openly state and discuss their disagreements and this is a source of strength on their part. The post-capitalist ones cannot, and have created a more brittle and intractable system as a result. Once the falsely induced impression of public unanimity has gone, public disagreement can all too quickly degenerate into abuse and even war. Since these states believe as fervently as anyone else that there can be no such disputes between socialist countries, it often follows that their antagonists are no longer seen as socialist and the whole dismal demonology of excommunication follows: capitalism has been restored, West German revanchists are gaining ground, Zionism is on the rampage and so on. On the other hand, the road backwards can be equally abrupt: as the Yugoslavs have found, the denounced of yesterday can become the favourites of today. This failure is not just a characteristic of foreign relations, however, since it points right to the very heart of the political systems prevailing within the post-capitalist countries: the monolithism in international relations is but a reflection of a similar monolithism in internal relations, and involves the same application of a misconceived centralism to political relations. Nor is this merely a matter of a reduplication of habits learnt in one sphere onto another: as the case of Czechoslovakia in 1968 made clear, the existence of open debate in any one part of the international post-capitalist system is seen to threaten all those party leaderships who deny such debate in their own country. In internal as in external affairs unanimity is the rule: the result in both cases is that differences, often of a legitimate and ultimately reconcilable kind, are suppressed, with the risk that they will explode in a more ferocious and uncontrollable manner at a later date.

4. The interlocking of international and internal practice is especially evident in one particular area, that of the press. We know from capitalist countries that foreign relations are not automatically of immediate concern to many people and we also know of the press capacity, precisely in an area of some disinterest, to scare or whip up public opinion. A socialist press should play an educative role in arousing interest in international issues and in countering the lack of information on the basis of which nationalistic phobias can so easily grow. Yet this requires precisely the kind of informed and critical press that is lacking in the post-capitalist states, without, to my knowledge, a single exception. In these countries the press reflects the monolithic political conceptions of the party leaderships: this leads not just to the presentation of exclusively official views on topics of the day but also, where no official position or emphasis is given, to a simple

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failure to report events at all.[1] The result is a selected view of events, with very large areas of silence; conditions in other countries, capitalist or not, and the start of relations between these countries and that of the reader in question, remain an almost closed book, the preserve of the top leadership. Though some forms of inner-party briefing sessions for party members exist, these is no substitute for an informed public discussion of foreign relations. The result is that, once again, relations with other non-capitalist states exist in an unreal world of stark contrast and little shade—of either fraternal unanimity or anathema. Only leaderships that kept their own population in ignorance of other countries could get away with telling them that, to take one example, "capitalism" had been restored in the USSR after 1953, or, to take another, that it was about to be re-established in the Czechoslovakia of 1968. And it is precisely when populations are kept in such ignorance of the real situation abroad that it becomes possible to make the quick turns in international relations that we have come to expect and, as we also know, to appeal to basest forms of nationalistic hatred and prejudice in order to arouse popular opinion against a foreign country. The absence of a democratic and informed socialist press therefore reflects the overall distortion of political power prevalent in post-revolutionary societies and is one more factor that helps to make conflicts between them more possible.

Nationalism

It has, in recent years, become increasingly unfashionable to invoke the concept of "proletarian internationalism". Along with its twin, the dictatorship of the proletariat, it has been abandoned by many European CPs and was indecently pushed off the stage at the Berlin conference of Communist Parties in 1976. Its failings are eagerly pointed out: nationalism has been underestimated, internationalism has been used to legitimate or conceal great-nation chauvinism, and now even revolutionary states are unable to avoid war. Yet the failings of internationalism are small indeed beside those of nationalism, for all its current "socialist" or even "proletarian" garbs. For it is nationalism, in capitalist and post-capitalist societies, which has left a trail of gore across the world over the past century and which is still doing so. As I have tried to argue, one of the factors contributing to its success has been a Utopian conception of international relations and indeed of internationalism itself. But the solution to these problems might better be found in a non-Utopian internationalism, one that recognises the distinctiveness and supports the rights of different nationalities, whilst opposing the intolerance and bombast that nationalism nearly always brings with it, and one which works towards a maximum degree of international collaboration and unity of purpose beyond national limits. If, under the impact of our collective experience, we shed some of the illusory assumptions of the past, it could provide us with the opportunity the better to theorise and implement the central political aims of the socialist programme of which internationalism is one and to avoid those catastrophes to which an ill-prepared, if well-intentioned, conception of such politics has contributed.

[1] To take but one recent example: readers of either *Pravda* or the Peking *People's Daily* over the past 18 months would have been hard put to make any sense of developments in Iran. The degree of opposition to the Shah was for a long time minimised by both these papers and even when they did begin to discuss it more openly this was in a selective, grudging manner. Once support was given to the anti-Shah forces, however, there was no proper discussion of the clerical and rightist element within the movement, with the result that readers of these papers must now still be wondering why there is so much turbulence in Iran and why relations with Iran's neighbours have deteriorated.

Dennis Ogden

An earlier speaker's reference to Trotsky's remark on becoming Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the first state to take the socialist road—"I will issue a few revolutionary proclamations to the peoples of the world, and then shut up shop"—was apt.

We do not always face up to the implications of Engels' comment that "an international movement of the proletariat is in general only possible between independent nations." Something of Trotsky's utopianism is still echoed in much of our discussion of the relations between the countries which have rejected capitalism.

There are illusions about the role of the state and its future; concepts of national interest are too readily dismissed as irrelevant in the consideration of relations between socialist states, while national sovereignty is seen by some as outdated and superseded by concepts of limited sovereignty and proletarian internationalism.

But as the late Professor Imre Vajda, the Hungarian writer on international economic relations,

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pointed out in the early 70s, "in modern times, sovereignty is a popular revolutionary aim . . . to me it says: this state is my state, the people's state, with defined, though continually changing, social and humanitarian goals. It is made sovereign by my will, by the will of the people, the power with which the people have endowed it for the realisation of their accepted goals, through accepted means, not the power which it exercises over the people."

In this interpretation and in its full development, the socialist state "is more sovereign because its people put the means of production and the results of their labour at the disposal of the state to a greater extent than is the case in capitalist society", he writes.

Economic Relations

Socialist states become directly involved in foreign economic relations. They encounter each other as buyers and sellers in the socialist world market—and as buyers and sellers they do not have, and cannot have, a common interest in the prices of the goods they buy and sell.

Foreign trade prices are a matter of vital concern for a country like Hungary, heavily dependent upon foreign trade, with the value of its exports approaching 50 per cent of its national income; for the Soviet Union, whose exports amount to only about 7 per cent of its national income, they are less crucial.

Conflict of interest arises too from the structure of intra-CMEA[1] trade. The Soviet Union is the main supplier of fuel and raw materials and an important purchaser of machinery and industrial consumer goods. By contrast, fuel and raw materials make up more than half Hungary's imports, and machinery and industrial consumer goods more than half her exports.

Reference has already been made to the substantial increases which have taken place in recent years in the prices at which the Soviet Union sells oil to other CMEA member-countries. They are necessary, say Soviet commentators, because the Soviet Uhion's admittedly large oil reserves are becoming increasingly costly to exploit, and those who share the benefits should help foot the bill. They add that Soviet oil prices to CMEA countries are still some 25 per cent below world prices, and that the Soviet Union is foregoing the opportunity to sell more of its oil at higher prices to Western countries for much-needed hard currency.

But for Hungary these increases represent an additional burden upon a balance of payments already subjected to immense strain as a result of the world market price explosion of the mid-70s and subsequent developments.

Conflicts of interest likewise arise as the socialist countries pursue the objectives of economic co-ordination and specialisation. Economic co-ordination and specialisation means one thing for countries which have relatively well-developed and broadly-based economies, and quite another for countries with economies which are less developed and less broadly based.

For Romania, the building of an iron and steel plant at Galati was a necessary contribution to her balanced economic development in line with the objective of creating a sound heavy industrial base and as a means of avoiding dependence upon others for basic industrial goods. For the Soviet Union, with a well-developed metallurgical industry able to supply Romania's needs, it was an economic nonsense, a symptom of nationalism and of a desire to flout agreed principles of economic co-operation.

Conflicts of this kind, to which the categories of "right" and "wrong" are inapplicable, will continue to arise. They are indeed made more acute by the immediate and direct involvement of states. They will not disappear merely because states have a common ideology, or similar political and economic systems. Nor can they be exorcised by ritual references to "proletarian internationalism".

[1] Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA)

Jean Stansfield

I thought the analysis this afternoon showed a refreshing approach to what is a very difficult matter for us. Monty has stated the problems. The fact that conflicts between Socialist States have occurred, that wars have actually broken out, is the stark reality and does raise big questions for marxists. We must examine these questions if we are to retain any credibility as a Marxist Party. I would like to make one or two points regarding my own immediate reactions to Monty's introduction.

Firstly, the Attraction of Socialism

One of the main attractions of Socialism has traditionally been the idealism outlined by Monty, particularly the idea that Socialism means greater freedom for the people, an end of repression, the introduction of compassion, fairness, equal opportunities and justice for every individual and an end to all wars. We have all believed that once a state became based on socialism, there would no longer be any reason to make war on another state, least of all another

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socialist state; that no socialist state could possibly have anything to gain from war. We thought that this kind of vicious aggression that has taken place in various socialist countries was not possible. These illusions are now quite shattered. Communist Party members who have held these beliefs find recent events in Indo-China totally bewildering. One problem this raises for us (to state the obvious) is what then is the attraction of Socialism if we are now saying that conflict is endemic in Socialist States?

Secondly, Communist Party Reaction to Situations of Conflict

We also need to be careful in our reactions to situations of conflict in the world if we are to maintain credibility. More careful than we were over the Indo-China developments when we reacted with totally uncritical support to the invasion of Cambodia by the Vietnamese supported forces and welcomed the victory of these forces with almost euphoric rapture in our press.

If international agreements and the principle of non-intervention between States are to mean anything, our response to such situations must be more objective and criteria must be established on which we can work out a principled stand.

Shortly afterwards, China made war on Vietnam which we rightly condemned. At the time I agreed with the view expressed by Carrillo, leader of the Spanish Party, who said that they had not supported the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, nor the invasion of Kampuchea by the Vietnamese-led forces and they condemned the invasion of Vietnam by China. However understandable the Vietnamese action was because of the previous Cambodian incursions on to their territory and however repressive the Pol Pot regime was, the state was still regarded as a socialist state and the invasion was a departure from the principles of national sovereignty and non-intervention. This raised problems at the time as to how potential parties should react and what public statements should be made. Our response was too simplistic because our analysis of the problems connected with national sovereignty is not fully worked out.

Thirdly, Stating the Problem and Qualifying National Sovereignty

Monty has stated the problem and the reasons (economic and non-economic) as he sees them for the conflicts between socialist states. Having analysed the problem, we need to begin the process of looking for possible approaches to deal with it. We can't just state the problem and leave it at that! Do we have to qualify the principles of national sovereignty? What principled qualifications are there to be made regarding national sovereignty in the light of recent experiences? Whilst it is of vital importance that we understand the problem, and it seems that at least we have got round to accepting the reality of the problem, we must now go further with our previous analysis of the principles governing relationships between states.

Fourthly, Democratic Rights

It seems to me that democratic rights of the people are very closely linked with any principles regarding relationships between states. Rights of self-determination must surely be the bedrock of any qualification of national sovereignty. Certainly for us in Britain this is a vital question. The extent to which we can extend democratic rights under capitalism, involve people in decision-making which affects their everyday lives, extend devolution and people's understanding of others rights of self-determination, to that extent we shall be able to avoid some of the conflicts that could arise from the nationalist interests of a British socialist state. If this is so important under capitalism, it becomes even more important in the development of Socialism in the world and in working for the kind of socialist states we wish to see developed.

John Gittings

The problem of disagreements between socialist states was in fact recognised very early on by Mao Zedong under pressure of the evident Soviet disapproval of his policies. In 1946 when Stalin advocated conciliation of Chiang Kai-shek in China Mao wrote a Party directive to explain why this should be so to his puzzled colleagues. The interests of socialist states, he said in effect, will vary according to their actual circumstances. It is necessary for the Soviet Union to seek limited compromise with the US at the present time (Stalin had told the Chinese Communists not to provoke the US by embarking on civil war). We on our part are faced with the necessity of making revolution.

From the first and only Mao-Stalin meeting in December 1949 onwards, Mao continued to recognise that differences would occur and later on he recalled—quite philosophically—how he and Stalin had "struggled" for more than two months. There is always bound to be a bit of aggro between people,

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and between states, he said. In retrospect the problem in the late 1950s was that the Russian leadership could not accept the fact of disagreement with China and attempted to bludgeon Mao into line—by withdrawing aid and other punitive actions. It was after this that the Chinese attitude, Mao's particularly, began to lose its former sense of flexibility and realism.

The "Imperialist Input"

But any discussion of Sino-Soviet or Sino-Vietnamese discord would be quite defective without full recognition that in a world characterised by uneven development the "imperialist input" is of vital importance.

From the "opening" of China in the 1840s onwards, Chinese foreign policy was continually on the defensive, concerned above all with seeking ways and means to ward off the various imperialist threats. This led to partial vision, in which the actions of the great powers (now the "super-powers") quite naturally dominated their outlook and everything else was subordinated to it. It also created the tactical necessity of playing off one great power against another—which again is an obvious characteristic of present day policy.

Apart from this historical moulding of the Chinese perception of the external world, we should also take full account of the contribution made by US imperialism in the 1950s towards widening the Sino-Soviet rift. A similar contribution has since been made by the US regarding China and Vietnam.

Already alerted to the fact of Sino-Soviet disagreement by Soviet leaks themselves—as documented in the memoirs of Adenauer, Macmillan among others—the West led by the US in practical terms was willing to talk to Moscow but not to Peking. After the Geneva 1954 Conference China had sought to initiate the sort of dialogue with the US which would eventually be successfully staged in the 1970s, but 20 years earlier Washington refused to take them seriously. Hence China could only watch with growing unease the unbalanced (from their perspective) development of bilateral detente between Washington and Moscow.

Of course the US continues to play the same game though the tactics have changed. What had been lost in the meantime, under pressure of isolation and the growing dogmatism of the Maoist leadership, was the greater subtlety of Chinese diplomacy in those earlier years. Unless, that is, we are now witnessing the start of a serious attempt to ink in the dotted line leading from Peking to Moscow, now that the one between Peking and Washington has been completed. There are immense internal obstacles—any Chinese leader advocating rapprochement with Moscow lays himself open to factional attack—and external obstacles (from the Soviet side) too. But if it could be achieved, and it would need goodwill on both sides, it would help to solve this major imbalance in great power relations which has caused so many problems and is largely responsible for the acute inter-socialist conflicts which now concern us.

Inter-Communist Conflicts and Vietnam

Anthony Barnett

(The author has written on South East Asia and is currently completing a book on Cambodia to be published by New Left Books.)

> "Hardly had the Yugoslavs made themselves comfortable, two or three hours after their arrival (in January 1948), than Djilas received an invitation from Stalin to call on him at the Kremlin, if he was not too tired from the journey. Djilas went immediately and was welcomed by Stalin and Molotov. Without many preliminaries Stalin began to speak about the Albanian problem. 'The Government of the USSR has no pretentions whatsoever concerning Albania. Yugoslavia is free to swallow Albania any time she wishes to do so.' At the word 'swallow' Stalin gestured: he licked the fingers of his right hand.
>
> Djilas was astonished by this remark, and retorted, 'But comrade Stalin, there is no question of swallowing Albania, only of friendly and allied relations between the two countries'.
>
> 'Well, that's one and the same thing,' Molotov remarked."
>
> (*Tito Speaks*, by V. Dedijer, London 1953, p. 320.)

INTRODUCTION

The conflicts between the socialist states of Vietnam, China and Cambodia form a crisis of great significance for socialists and a turning point in world affairs. In general terms socialists have to face up to what is now a pattern in the relationship

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of neighbouring Communist states. As these are currently organised, they have regularly got into conflict with each other. The first of these conflicts began with the emergence of the second socialist state to gain its existence primarily through its own armed struggle: Yugoslavia. Within three years it was isolated and anathematised by the Soviet Union. Without going through the entire list of these disputes, mention must be made of the central conflict, around which is axed the imperialist strategy of today—the Sino-Soviet conflict. The contemporary degeneration of relations between the Communist states in and bordering South East Asia, is only the latest in a succession almost as long in time as the existence of a plurality of socialist countries.

A Part of Imperialist Policy

Why should this be the case? Socialists can in no way afford to evade this question, but nor should we pin it to our breasts with a great wailing of *mea culpa*. These conflicts are an aspect of the struggle against the world domination of capitalism. That is to say, the conflicts between socialist states are part of an imperialist policy of divide and rule.

To insist on this point is not to take an easy way out of the problem. On the contrary, it is all the more shameful to divide in the face of the enemy than in other circumstances. Furthermore, I began by pointing to the established *pattern* of inter-socialist strife because there is something structural about it. The hammer blows of imperialism have forged state systems in the socialist countries that can be embattled, secretive and often dictatorial (even when they are not subject to criminal policies, wholesale purges and outlandish cults as was the USSR under Stalin, or China under Mao's personal direction after 1965). These states conduct their relations with each other in secret, and therefore their communist parties conduct inter-party relations as a special form of national diplomacy. Inevitably, the national moment takes priority over the socialist one. In certain circumstances, of course, secret diplomacy and patient efforts at patching up differences are necessary. The Vietnamese Communists were supremely good at this until victory, and would not have won their victory without such an approach. And this is a good example of the way in which socialist countries have internalised a form of conduct which is ultimately very divisive, as a function of defending themselves from attack. I will return to this aspect below, when I mention the secrecy of Vietnamese relations with China and Cambodia.

A Turning Point

But let me go back to my opening sentence: the crisis does not merely concern socialists, the conflict within South East Asia represents a turning point of a special kind. Vietnamese unification 30 years after the French attempted to reverse the verdict of Ho Chi Minh's August Revolution, has been one of the greatest triumphs in mankind's liberation from exploitation and oppression. With the irreplaceable material aid of the socialist countries, but with only their reluctant assent and at times even against their wishes, the Vietnamese people, led by their Communist Party broke the hegemony of the United States over the post-war world. Today, the Western media and the Chinese press (sometimes it is difficult to differentiate between the two) are trying to stain and tarnish the quality of that magnificent achievement. In their efforts they really condemn themselves.

The victory of 1975 has brought into existence more than the three socialist countries of Indo-China—Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Without it, there would not today be socialist governments in the process of consolidating power in Angola or Ethiopia, to take two obvious examples. The wars which broke out this year have given imperialism a chance to reverse the result. First a campaign has been launched, and it has been quite consciously deliberated, to re-legitimise direct US intervention. Second, the Vietnamese are being attacked in an effort retrospectively to justify the war. That is what the campaign over the "boat people" is about—to make the war appear "honourable". Third, there is the hope that the "containment" of the Vietnamese revolution will break its humanitarian and democratic qualities, by making the regime there unpopular, its economy unsuccessful. The hot war between the erstwhile socialist partners has triggered off a new cold war whose target is Communism everywhere.

The Balance of Power

At the same time, the fact of the 1975 victories must not lead socialists themselves to be confused as to the real balance of power on a world scale. The Vietnamese astonished the world because they defied the odds against them. But those odds still remain stacked, and whilst the overwhelming position of the United States internationally has been broken, it is still easily the most powerful country of the most powerful bloc. It is especially important for socialists in the West to grasp this fact and hold on to it, otherwise one's basic judgement will be wrecked. It is almost impossible today to pick up a "serious" newspaper without reading in it that Soviet imperialism is more aggressive or more powerful than the West: that the West is now the weaker of the two forces contesting for superiority. This is nonsense. All that has happened since 1975, is that the socialist bloc is now no longer totally the subordinate.

The crucial economic index is simple enough. If

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one compares the total gross domestic products of the COMECON countries with the major capitalist ones, the ratio is 1 to 4, that is, the socialist countries create one-quarter of the wealth the capitalist countries produce, counted in World Bank figures. In so far as there is a more equal military balance, its manufacture is thus far more punitive for the socialist countries, which anyway started from a much lower basis and have suffered far more from military destruction. Furthermore, the need for this military balance has further exacerbated the inherited economic weakness of the socialist countries. And this stricture applies to China as well, today perhaps more than to any other society.

The United States evidently played a blatant role in bringing about the present state of hostilities. Peking only came out openly against Hanoi after Brzezinski visited the Chinese capital in May 1978 and denounced "regional hegemonism", codeword for Vietnam. Hanoi and Peking were played off against each other by Washington, as each strove for diplomatic recognition in the months that followed. Teng Hsiao-ping was given permission for a short war with Vietnam, when he went to Washington. That is to say, he raised the matter and was assured that the new economic relationship would not be effected. The roots of all this go back at least to the Nixon visit to Peking and Moscow in 1972, and in a more general way even to the 1950s. There is no difficulty in demonstrating the divisive role of the USA. What must be understood is that this capacity to exacerbate division stems from its great economic superiority.

This has been a somewhat long introduction, but I think that a balanced assessment is only possible when placed in the actual context. Perhaps the best way to clarify the specific issues raised by the conflicts in South East Asia is by asking a series of questions.

1. HAS THERE EVER BEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT BEFORE?

Yes. The obvious parallel to China/Vietnam/Cambodia is USSR/Yugoslavia/Albania after 1945, when the first tried to exacerbate the position of the last in order to break the one in the middle. The victory over Fascism in 1945 was followed in 1948 by the Yugoslavs being accused of being "fascist". The parallel between 1945 and 1978 is close even on this ideological level, the Chinese press is currently, of all things, trying to accuse the Vietnamese of "Fascism". In addition to the ideological "fit", there was in the 1940s the charge that Belgrade wanted to build a Balkan federation, not that there is anything improper about such a proposal; just as the Chinese are hysterical today over alleged Vietnamese attempts to create an Indo-Chinese federation.

The point of drawing such a comparison is that it allows one to see very clearly that the primary contradiction is that between Vietnam and China, just as it was between Yugoslavia and the USSR, whilst the conflict between the two smaller states is secondary to the major dispute. In both cases attempts by the "middle power" to conduct proper relations with its smaller neighbour were ruined by the deliberate actions of the "great power".

2. WHY THEN DID THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN INSTANCE END UP IN WAR?

In a sentence, because Cambodia attacked Vietnam. There is absolutely no doubt about this point. American specialists, uniformly hostile to Vietnam and desiring to cast it in the role of an "imperialist power" have all acknowledged that Cambodia was the aggressor. They have access to US intelligence, and in writing for scholarly journals need to inform their readers of the main elementary facts whatever gloss they may put on them. And in this context, if not in the "serious press", it is recognised that Cambodia attacked Vietnam. (I am referring to specialists such as Douglas Pike, Sheldon Simon, Carl Jackson.) There were two waves of fighting. First, a wave of incidents immediately after liberation in 1975. It was started by Cambodia, which seized Tho Chu island, continued by Vietnam which seized Wei island in reprisal, but settled by the end of the year, when a *modus vivendi* came into effect. Secondly, beginning in 1977, there was a further wave after the Cambodians had withdrawn from the border commissions. In particular after April 1977, when a multi-divisional attack was launched on Tay Ninh province of Vietnam, and then again in September 1977 when, to coincide with the announcement of Pol Pot's forthcoming trip to China, the Cambodians attacked along a 100 kilometre front.

Now it is true that these are Vietnamese "claims", even if they are accepted by US specialists. How can socialists accept them if the other side denies such facts? However, the other side does not deny them. We know there was heavy fighting by the summer of 1977, but the Cambodians have never charged the Vietnamese with attacking their country between 1976 and September 1977. Therefore, the hostilities during the spring and summer of 1977 must have been Cambodian initiated. We also know that there was heavy fighting in September which led to a Vietnamese counter-attack in December. Hanoi does not acknowledge the latter, but nor does it deny the fact, which is regarded as common knowledge. Therefore, we must ask, who is right: did the Vietnamese attack in September 1977 as the Cambodians alleged in their *first* statement, when they broke off diplomatic relations; or did the Cambodians attack then, in great numbers, causing much destruction, as Hanoi claims? Well, the answer can be found in the *Black Paper*. This is the long document pub-

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lished by Phnom Penh in September 1978. Its declared aim is to detail all the crimes of "annexationism" and so forth Vietnam committed against Cambodia. It bears the evident hand of Pol Pot, in its formulations. But, unaware of what his diplomatic service had prepared the year before, he stated the truth in at least one respect, in his final summary of Cambodia's relations with Vietnam: the Cambodian *Black Paper* dates the Vietnamese attacks upon Cambodia in 1977 as beginning in December not September. It was therefore in response to major acts of aggression over the preceding eight months from April to September, that the Vietnamese finally replied in force.

At Great Cost

But it cost the Vietnamese very dearly. For the Chinese egged on the Cambodians to sever all relations with Hanoi and to make the counter-attack public, so that Cambodia would appear the victim. What Stalin tried to trick the Yugoslavs into doing, Peking achieved with regard to Vietnam because Pol Pot, being a lesser figure than Enver Hoxa, was desperate for support and thus himself turned to a war mobilisation to stay in power. In December 1977 the Cambodians were able to hold a press conference in Peking and announce that their country was under attack from Vietnam, because until then Hanoi had remained silent.

Within a few days the Vietnamese withdrew their forces. A fact celebrated by the Cambodians as a massive military victory which demonstrated that they could defeat their neighbours. Hanoi issued its peace offer on February 5th, 1978 despite the Cambodian attack into Vietnam in the wake of their withdrawing army. This offer of a permanent peace included mutual withdrawals and international inspection of the frontier. The Cambodians refused this offer and did so repeatedly through to April 1978. I will only make two points about it. First, it shows that Vietnam's priority was a peaceful border. If its major objective had been to "annex" or "subordinate" Cambodia it would never have suggested an internationally guaranteed border between itself and its neighbour. Secondly, Peking at that stage was supplying Vietnam with one-third of its aid, and Hanoi had made it clear that it prized multiple relations in order to maximise its independence—it had recently turned down offers from the USSR to join COMECON, precisely because this would have meant a rupture with the People's Republic of China. Thus, if China's interest had really been to *safeguard* the integrity of Cambodia, it would not merely have moved to get Cambodia to accept the Hanoi offer, it would itself have made a similar proposal. In fact its objective was to destabilise Vietnam, whatever the cost to the Cambodian people.

3. BUT WHY SHOULD CAMBODIA HAVE ATTACKED VIETNAM, IT STRETCHES CREDIBILITY TO ARGUE THAT IT WOULD ASSAULT A MUCH STRONGER POWER?

In the first instance, I think it is clear that the Cambodians were given assurances by Peking that were close to guarantees. Overconfident and at odds amongst themselves the Chinese encouraged hostilities. But they could only encourage something which existed: a war party in Phnom Penh. This was the Pol Pot group. Its rise to power over the Cambodian revolutionary movement and its destruction of that movement will be the subject of a separate study. But some idea of the instability of the regime which resulted in Cambodia after the evacuation of the towns and the total militarisation of civilian life into work brigades is given by the following fact: there was a coup attempt every six months from September 1975 to May 1978, in Cambodia. Major purge followed major purge relentlessly. Some of these have been documented by Pol Pot's propaganda services as "Vietnamese coups". The major one which took place in April 1977, and destroyed two very senior figures, has *not* been so described. There was, it seems, a Chinese coup of some sort, out of which Pol Pot emerged supreme. From that point date the major attacks; and his role as a public celebrity, after he had (thank you very much) agreed to announce the existence of the Cambodian Communist Party.

In Africa recently we have seen two examples of smaller states attacking larger ones. Somalia struck at the Ethiopian Ogaden after *being encouraged* by Saudi Arabia and the USA. Uganda attacked Tanzania in an effort *to resolve internal tensions*, stemming from the character of Idi Amin's regime. In Cambodia both these two pressures were at work. Incredible as it may seem, and it is only explicable through an analysis of the whole process of the revolution in Cambodia, there is no duobt: Cambodia systematically attacked Vietnam along the delta border and rejected a reasonable peace offer without even any discussion of it.

4. BUT WHY, GRANTING THIS, DID VIETNAM HAVE TO OVERTHROW THE POL POT GOVERNMENT? COULD NOT IT HAVE SIMPLY DEFENDED ITS BORDERS, RATHER THAN TRANSGRESS "NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY"?

In my opinion, a nation which attacks another militarily thereby loses the defensive right accorded by the principle of an inviolate national sovereignty. This principle surely cannot be used as a shield to protect aggression. But you do not have to agree with this to see that more was at stake than merely a border conflict. Because of the economic and social situation in South Vietnam the attacks from

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Cambodia threatened the whole process of peaceful unification and the integrity of the revolution in the South. Two things have to be borne in mind, relating to time and to violence. The Chinese Ambassador in Laos has been quoted as saying in 1978, after the fighting became public, that it would be a "long, long war". Secondly, despite all the hysteria in the press today, the Vietnamese *diminished* the degree of violence in their country. The new economic zones, for example, many of which were close to Cambodia, were aspects of a policy endorsed by an independent United Nations mission which went to North and South Vietnam after the war and before the country entered the United Nations. But the Vietnamese, absolutely rightly, have not used force against their population to populate these zones. Pressure, inevitably, but hard pressure is involved when a British Chancellor uses unemployment to keep wages down. There is a world of difference between this and forced movements of population, directed labour and the destruction of recourse to due process. This was the difference between Vietnam and Cambodia. But there was a "draw back" to the Vietnamese choice. Conditions of peace had to prevail for such resettlement to take place, precisely because it was not heavily policed. The process of healing could not continue under conditions of hostilities. Thus, faced with the prospect of a *protracted* conflict, the whole policy of the VCP, to conduct peaceful unification and basic reconciliation was placed at risk. The victory of 1975 itself was at stake.

Divisions

Perhaps even this strain could have been sustained by a society already unified and working in unison. But this was not the case with the southern part of Vietnam after 1975. The area from the Saigon region southwards has historically been the most militant in Vietnam, but it is also the most divided and chaotic region, quite unlike the compact and homogeneous North. It is divided ethnically, communally and economically as well as politically. There are two major ethnic communities: the Khmer and the Hoa (or Vietnamese of Chinese descent). Both number over a million. The Khmer were used by the US as a base from which to recruit special forces, and counter-guerrilla troops, which were deployed inside Cambodia against the Vietnamese. The Chinese community, of course, benefited economically from the war and was extremely active in the internal supply system, profiting more from the US than from the NLF. In addition to these two ethnic groups there are three major religious groups as well as the Buddhist movement. There are two large sects. The Hoa Hao is a militant millenarian group, historically anti-Communist, based along the southern part of the Vietnamese/Cambodian border, and some of them are apparently Khmer. The second religious group like the Hoa Hao arose during the inter-war period as a response to the pressures induced by French colonialism. The Cao Dai is a syncretic religion, highly autonomous, and also based on the border, in Tay Ninh province especially—scene of the April 1977 attacks.

Third, there is a large Roman Catholic community, well organised and of course anti-communist. Nearly a million were brought South after Vietnam was divided in 1954. They were settled close to Saigon to give the capital some protection, and evidently provided a social base for the US-backed regimes. Like the ethnic groupings, the religious ones also created distinct political and economic interests. Now, in a period of drawn out fighting, with the Chinese merchants speculating in rice and the Khmer villages resistant to Communist organisation, one can already see that an uncontrollable division is a potential possibility.

But the economic situation made everything graver still. Natural calamities added to a poor food situation, such that by the end of 1978 half a million hectares of land that had been initially cleared were lying fallow. It was and is imperative for Vietnam to get this land under cultivation and begin the real struggle against the after-effects of defoliation. This was impossible while there was fighting, which displaced hundreds of thousands of peasants and obliged even more extremely fertile ricelands to be left untouched, except by shells.

The Losses

One further point, because of the picture which is currently being painted of Vietnam. The Party in the South, and the NLF, suffered horrendous losses. The Communists too were part of the fiery militancy of the region. There were 300,000 in the NLF by 1963, at least. But the destruction wrought upon this movement and its cadres was very nearly complete. The core network survived, but only underground. In many places losses were 96 or 97 per cent. The Phoenix Programme eliminated tens of thousands of the village representatives, many of them respected individuals who were not Party cadres, but who administered their communities when they had been liberated prior to 1965. So, one must add to the imbalance and division of the South the sheer difficulty of recovering from the war, when the winners locally took much worse losses than the losers.

Which brings me to the final group, the million plus of ARVN troops, the tens of thousands of Thieu police and civil servants, not to mention the many others employed directly by the USA, who were thrown out of their employment by the victory of 1975. The Communists did and are doing everything they can to win these people over to them, at

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least to respect the Hanoi government and obey the law, as well as to earn their living again in circumstances no longer subsidised by the richest country in the world. In circumstances of protracted war, created by Cambodian Communists, the achievement of such a new allegiance is almost inconceivable.

In no way, it seems to me, could Hanoi have tolerated a "long, long war" along its socially fractious and economically fertile Cambodian border. A war in the remoter regions of the Cardamom Mountains was obviously preferable. Militarily, it would mean greater losses in terms of troops and equipment, and a bigger strain on the economy. But politically and socially it could be handled, whilst a defensive border operation in which the Cambodians and their Chinese advisors (of whom there were at least 10,000) were granted the initiative, to strike at will, was intolerable. Thus Vietnam, to strike back *in its own defence* had to do the job completely.

A final point, which needs to be made, follows from this. The Pol Pot regime was the most terrible to have been created in the name of socialism, and the full record will be *worse*, I fear, than people now seem to believe. But this was *not* the reason for its overthrow by the Vietnamese. It was the ultimate reason why action was necessary, perhaps, but the primary motive for Hanoi was to protect its own national process. It was for this reason that it proposed international inspection of a demilitarised border, that would have prevented any Vietnamese dominance over Phnom Penh certainly for the foreseeable future. Hanoi's prime motive and objective was neither to assert its hegemony over the whole of Indo-China in some illicit or improper fashion, or by force, nor was it to get rid of the Pol Pot government as an act of altruism to the Cambodian people and to the world. It was a defensive operation related to the same issue which has obsessively concerned the Hanoi leadership for a generation: the unification of Vietnam.

5. BUT, IF THE CASE IS SO CONVINCING, WHY DID THE VIETNAMESE INVADE CAMBODIA IN SECRET, DENYING THEY WERE DOING SO?

As I suggested earlier, I think this issue strikes at one of the reasons for the propensity socialist states currently exhibit of getting into conflict with each other. There were two stages of Hanoi's secrecy, each of which was followed by systematic distortion in the Western media. The first, as I have said, was when the Vietnamese did not reveal that they had been grossly attacked. They thereby lost the opportunity to demonstrate that they were unequivocally the victim of aggression on a scale much greater than the small village attacks launched by the Khmer Rouge against Thailand. Why did they keep quiet then? First of all, because they did not want to provoke an irreversible showdown with China, or play into Peking's hands and the hands of the Pol Pot group by publicly attacking Cambodia. There were two reasons why such an approach made sense to the Hanoi leadership, apart from the fact that no group of politicians likes to see a process escape its control. First, this was the way Ho trained them to behave. They had dealt with very severe differences between themselves and the USSR and China, by keeping quiet, by manoeuvring for a change, and by, in the end, winning a practical kind of unity. In contrast, the polemical disputes, between Moscow and Belgrade, between Peking and Moscow, were object lessons in the degeneration of socialist and international relations. Everybody inside Vietnam knew that attacks were taking place, for some mysterious reason or other, from a regime which emptied cities, abolished money and so forth. But officially this was not known. Therefore, neither the western nor Third World supporters of the Indo-Chinese liberation struggles knew about it, nor were there broadcasts to the Cambodian people appealing to them to prevent an escalating war. By remaining silent Hanoi ensured that opposition to Pol Pot remained either diplomatic or covert and conspiratorial. No open political pressure which might have mobilised support occurred in time.

There was, however, an additional reason for Hanoi's reticence. It was not merely a continuation of Ho Chi Minh's policy. After the 1975 fighting there had been a lull, and the possibility of agreement. Both the Phnom Penh leadership and the Chinese one were extremely unstable. This instability led them to take issue with Vietnam because in neither capital was there a group securely based in power and sure enough of itself to treaty with Hanoi in peace. But the factional situation meant instability and therefore the possibility that a showdown might be averted due to a new internal change in the neighbouring regimes. Therefore silence was golden. Hanoi probably calculated that any other course would box all the Peking factions into a hostile attitude. The critical moment in this respect was almost certainly Le Duan's visit to Peking in November 1977, the month following Pol Pot's. Apparently friendly, the day after he arrived home in Hanoi, Peking threatened war over the Spratly Islands, quite directly. It was then that Hanoi must have realised that almost all its options had been closed by Peking. But it had not been groundless for Hanoi to have hoped that some sort of reconciliation could be reached, and they gave everything to achieve this, including suffering attacks in silence. In retrospect this was a mistake, however understandable.

But after the conflict became public knowledge, at the end of December 1977, Hanoi issued a long

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and credible statement. It invited reporters in. There was a cover story in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* detailing the Cambodian attacks on Ha Tien. But the Western media did not attempt to portray the facts of the case. It simply enjoyed the spectacle of two Communist allies fighting each other. The Vietnamese case fell by default. After silence was broken, distortion took place in the way the issue was covered, distortion for which the Vietnamese cannot be held responsible.

The Reason

The reason for Hanoi invading, while claiming that there was an "uprising" in Cambodia which they were merely supporting, is slightly different. Here too there was a successful history of such a policy. When before 1975 the Vietnamese troops were in Laos or in the Cambodian sancturies, Hanoi denied that this was so. Everybody knew that it *was* the case, yet saying so was blatantly more false than the Vietnamese denial. This was so because the Americans were saying it. They were trying to suggest that the Vietnamese were "invading" their own country, although the USA's breach of Laotian and Cambodian neutrality, and its destruction of the Geneva Accords was evidently the real aggression. Hence, to get excited about Vietnamese "violations" was in practice to endorse even greater ones. Furthermore, there were no Vietnamese troops in Vientiane or Phnom Penh. In short, it paid Hanoi to "breach" the sovereignty of its neighbours—with the agreement of their Communist Parties it should be added, and in the case of Cambodia with the secret agreement of Sihanouk—while denying that this was taking place.

But when the same secrecy was extended to Cambodia this year it boomeranged. To invade an entire country without saying so appears incredibly sinister. The Third World countries in particular were antagonised by the lack of an "up front" approach, and it would have benefited Hanoi to have been more straightforward. Why wasn't it? First, because the Vietnamese Communists do *not* accept the idea of "limited sovereignty", they have been fighting for 30 years to obtain their own. The last thing they would concede would be a policy in international affairs that the Chinese might use against Vietnam. In addition, I have the impression that they hoped other Third World countries would appreciate their diplomatic denial whilst understanding their military predicament. Third, they were unable to prepare the world for what they were about to do, because the element of surprise was an absolute military necessity. Had they forewarned the Chinese, the consequences might have been much graver. (There was an element of surprise. Western intelligence and probably Peking thought that there would be a limited invasion to the banks of the Mekong only, forcing an evacuation of Phnom Penh, but not embracing the whole of Cambodia. Then, they expected the national salvation front to recruit forces to carry on the fight. In military terms, the Vietnamese army attacked as if this was its objective, drew some of the major Cambodian units northwards, and then cut them off from below, opening the road to Phnom Penh and the West.)

The Press

In retrospect, it would undoubtedly have been better if the Vietnamese had criticised the evacuation of the cities, and the nature of the Cambodian regime and publicised the fighting in 1977. But currently there is no gradation between virulent polemics and the privacy of diplomatic appeals in important matters, between Communist countries. The right to criticise *constructively* with all the implications for democracy at home, has yet to be established in the socialist world. Partly, of course, because of the absence of a press attached to proletarian traditions but independent of the state; a socialist press, in other words, which does not function within the constraints of state policy. The issue is of the utmost importance in South East Asia, now that there is a new *set* of states tied by a triangle of friendship treaties. They must try to discover a language of communication which satisfies cadres in all three countries. Immediately, one can see that the presence of China, hovering to exploit differences, will push them into covering up differences which are natural, so that instead of their being resolved and discharged, they may fester, be suppressed or find in the end an unnatural or antagonistic expression.

Finally, it should be added that there was resistance to Pol Pot as Hanoi claimed. I do not think that the Vietnamese would have gone in if they had thought *they* might meet *popular* resistance. Nor did they. There was resistance and opposition to Pol Pot, and this has provided the basis for the rapid isolation of the Khmer Rouge, a remarkably rapid one so far, given the great size of the Cambodian army, the length of time it had to prepare and the advantages for guerrilla warfare of the Cambodian terrain. But it must also be remembered that the cream of the Cambodian Communist movement went down, in purge after purge as they failed to unify their opposition to Pol Pot.

6. HAS THE SOVIET UNION PLAYED NO ROLE IN ALL THIS?

It is necessary to be balanced and exact in one's judgement here, at a time when the West has become deranged on this topic. First, the USSR has provided Vietnam with very great assistance, economic and military. It has been the main force which has prevented the isolation of the Vietnamese revolution. Whatever criticisms might follow are secondary to

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this, and we should all be very grateful for it. At the same time, the USSR has benefited from the conflict, it has gained in leverage over China. The two countries may negotiate with each other again, thanks to Vietnam (and the USA's refusal to support Teng Hsiao-ping *all* the way to Lang Son!). Soviet support has not been totally disinterested. One clear sign of this is that there has not been sufficient aid forthcoming for Cambodia. I have the impression that the Vietnamese have not allowed the USSR to set up shop there on a large scale, because Hanoi wants to reach a settlement with China, and obviously the shape of Cambodian politics would be important in this. Without a political *quid pro quo* it may be (I emphasise this is not well documented) that the Soviet Union has not poured in the aid needed, badly needed; disinterested aid that the people there must obtain, and which would win the USSR great appreciation but not more leverage over Peking, and might even diminish its leverage over Hanoi.

The critical question to ask these days is what is Vietnam's view of the USSR? There is no doubt that Hanoi feels that the Chinese are pushing it into reliance on Moscow. The Vietnamese fought the war against China with three objectives in mind. In order of priority they were, first, to pin down the Chinese forces and prevent them from gaining a military success—an objective which was achieved. Second, to retain their position in Cambodia and not be deflected from it by the Chinese intrusion—in this also they were successful. Third, they wanted to keep Soviet involvement to a minimum. Here, they were relatively successful. (It seems pretty certain that there were direct bilateral negotiations over Vietnam between Moscow and Peking, which Hanoi of course did not want.) One of the reasons for the way the Vietnamese command kept its response to the Chinese invasion at as low a level as possible, commensurate with winning, was to prevent the USSR from being drawn in.

The Chinese and the United States, on the other hand, for very different reasons, perhaps ultimately conflicting ones, both want to polarise Vietnam into dependence on the USSR. They want to sever its relations with other countries, and prevent all aid from reaching it, of any sort. As I began this discussion with a mention of Yugoslavia, perhaps I can end it with another. It seems to me a particularly galling paradox that one of the leading countries in the non-aligned movement should be endorsing a Chinese-type position and attacking Vietnam. For the record of Hanoi is manifestly not one of inclination towards a satellite status! A new, major set of Communist revolutions took place in South East Asia, on positions of international solidarity, multiple relations and socialist independence. How can it benefit the Third World to push Vietnam into a situation where only the orthodox socialist countries support it? It is not the Vietnamese who are ceasing to be non-aligned, it is China in particular which is driving it towards the Soviet Union, and in such a situation one is glad that the Soviet Union is there. But in addition to the Chinese, countries like Yugoslavia are apparently playing the same game, and preventing Vietnam from creating its own, manifestly original and creative role, by forcing it into a cold war definition, simply because (and who should be able to understand this better than the Yugoslavs?) Hanoi refuses to subordinate itself to Peking. Belgrade's role should surely be to *prevent* further polarisation, not encourage it, as it seems to be doing at the moment.

It is understandable that socialists in Europe look upon the USSR with suspicion, because of the invasion of Czechoslovakia; although today this suspicion is being exploited in a fashion that may be unprincipled. But it is grotesque to project this regional perspective onto the rest of the world. Grotesque because it reproduces the same kind of bureaucratic, self-centred and defensive mentality which it is supposedly opposing. It is not very difficult to see the obvious in South East Asia, if one stops thinking about oneself. Vietnam represents an original, independent and dynamic form of Communism, on the borders of China. This is not to the liking of Peking. The People's Republic laid claim to Vietnam's coastal sea, such that shipping en route to Saigon and Haiphong would have to pass through China's territorial waters. It supported Pol Pot's unprovoked aggression. It claimed as its citizens "one million several hundred thousand" ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, to use its mathematics. (One of the causes of the present state of war was Hanoi's insistence that the ethnic Chinese were Vietnamese citizens. Whereas Peking's demands were such that Cholon, the Chinese quarter of Ho-Chi-Minh-Ville (Saigon) would have become a virtual extra-territorial concession, its property and commerce directly protected by Peking, under article 54 of the new Chinese Constitution—which was promulgated, incidently, the same month as Hanoi legislated the nationalisation of Cholon commerce.) In addition to this astonishing set of political demands, Peking also represented a less democratic form of Communism. I am not suggesting that a country threatened by famine and overwhelmingly peasant, such as Vietnam, can be close to creating open political freedom for its working class. But it is evident, from the lack of purges, that a type of human and collective discipline exists within the Vietnamese CP superior to that of China. Thus, in South East Asian terms, Vietnam is the Czechoslovakia to Peking's Moscow. Its socialism is more advanced, its national and political independence something that socialists everywhere must do their utmost to

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preserve. The difference between the Czech and Vietnamese invasions is that the latter was able to fight back on all fronts, first because of its internal strengths but also because of the vital assistance accorded it by the oldest socialist state. This may be a paradox but, I repeat, unless socialists in Europe, especially the major Communist Parties of both Eastern and Western Europe, adjust themselves to this not very baffling turn of events, it will be *they* who reproduce a crude socialist "*realpolitik*", and they who support in China a more Stalinist form of politics.

7. WHAT IS THE MAIN THING TO BE DONE NOW?

The most urgent need is for aid to be sent to Cambodia. Medicines, especially anti-malarial drugs; vitamins, food, and more food; cooking utensils of all sorts—a few hundred thousand pots and pans; ploughs and basic farming equipment. The socialist states which may be poor but are not without some resources—Angola, Cuba, Ethiopia, Mozambique—should be doing everything they can. In the long run it will help them. The population of Cambodia, now gravely diminished, needs simple assistance delivered fast, without political strings. Aid such as this will not only help Cambodians who have suffered unimaginably over the past few years, it will also help the peoples of Indo-China to breathe and get some respite from the pressures bearing down upon them.

Discussion

Hilda Vernon

Conflicts between socialist states cannot be summed up or defined in a simple all-embracing formula. Neither can there be one "correct" reaction applicable to one and all.

Leaving aside questions of theoretical importance, and differences in analysis of trends, the most likely source of conflict seems to lie in what is covered by the groups of terms—nations, nationality, nationalism, nationhood.

These concepts can express themselves in true patriotism often leading to acts of bravery and sacrifice and presenting no menace to any other state; they can also develop into chauvinism and racialism.

The history of the Vietnamese people is illuminating—over many centuries they have developed a tradition of national union in the face of foreign invaders. This has been a source of strength enabling them to defeat aggressors much more powerful than themselves. I remember Xuan Thuy during protracted negotiations leading to the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement saying to the American delegation: "You cannot understand our people. We have developed our tradition of national union over thousands of years against foreign invaders. This has given us the strength to endure long wars and finally secure victory".

It was this tradition of national union which lay behind the concept of "national reconciliation" advocated from the very earliest days by the National Liberation Front. It thus followed, after the complete liberation of South Vietnam, that the policy was not to "punish" but to "re-educate" those who had collaborated with the Americans. Within a very short time more than one million of Saigon's armed forces and administration were re-absorbed into the general population with full civilian rights. A main political aim in Vietnam is to restore complete "national union", and it is a national union where the various minority peoples find their place.

Sources of conflict undoubtedly exist in those states where nationality and the state do not coincide —equally between socialist countries as others. When, for example, national boundaries include territory which was once part of a neighbouring state. In such situations there can be quite large minorities of people who feel disadvantaged because their language, culture and economic development are treated as secondary to the dominant nationality. And they may look to their fellow countrymen across the border and think their lot would be improved if borders could be changed.

The fact that some natural resources now lie within different state boundaries equally poses the possibility of conflicting interests.

These conditions need not necessarily lead to war —in fact war would be most unlikely to resolve the issue. We must believe that it would be possible to arrive at a *modus vivendi* if developments seem critical.

Where this has not happened, as in the case of the Kampuchean and Chinese invasions of Vietnam, I think there can be no question that we give wholehearted and complete support to Vietnam. Both Kampuchea and China made territorial claims on Vietnam, refused to enter into discussion and carried out invasions causing much suffering and losses in human life, destruction of towns and

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villages, and the people's property, and committed savage outrages against people.

We would condemn such actions whatever the countries involved. That all three countries belong to the socialist camp is a cause not only for condemnation, but anxiety. Even so, I do not believe we can think in terms of "socialist countries having a propensity to settle differences in armed conflict". This has not been demonstrated to any degree and I would suggest that the almost unanimous and unequivocal support from the socialist world for Vietnam in these two conflicts betrays a reaction to war between socialist countries which supports this belief.

Nationalism and Internationalism

Jack Woddis

In dealing with nationalism and internationalism today we are touching on one of the most complex and important aspects of the world process to socialism. The relationship between the national and international tasks facing working people, between the thrust of each people to achieve its own revolution and the mutually beneficial and voluntary co-operation of nations for their common aims and to safeguard their own particular interests has sometimes been bedevilled by twin errors, each of which feeds the other.

Thus, for some, the international has primacy over the national. For others, it is the national cause which predominates. The former leads to hierarchical conceptions and to big-nation chauvinism; the latter to narrow nationalism and isolationism. Only by grasping the essential unity of the national and the international, the inter-dependent character of their relationship, can we fruitfully discuss the problems that have surfaced in the realm of relations between socialist states.

For us, in Britain, the problem is, perhaps, rendered more difficult because of the traditional attitude taken by the English working class towards the national question, an attitude which finds its reflection in the approach of many communists. It takes the form of a rejection of other people's national identity, aspirations and problems, and a refusal to recognise one's own national question. This failure to take proper account of one's own national problem is expressed in two forms. Either there is an indulgence in leftist rhetoric, of being concerned with "socialism not nationalism"—a view which Marx described as a kind of "bourgeois-nationalist internationalism". Or we have the lapse into crude, narrow-minded jingoism and chauvinism.

At the risk, therefore, of saying things which, in other circumstances, might be reasonably obvious, I think it is necessary to make some preliminary remarks regarding nationalism and socialist construction before touching on other aspects of this area.

Class and Nation

To understand the relation of the national question to socialism it is necessary to understand the relationship between class and nation.

The nation is a reality. As a form of human community it evolves historically, on a given territory. It develops a common language and a common culture, and builds up a common economic structure. Different social classes, in totality, comprise the nation. For socialists and communists the question cannot be posed in terms of class versus nation. Rather, it is a question as to which class or classes are to be the decisive and guiding force in the nation. In whose class interests is the nation to be governed?

The working class cannot be indifferent to the nation. As Marx and Engels put it in *The Communist Manifesto* over 130 years ago:

> "Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is *at first a national struggle*. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie." (Own italics.)

And, once again, the working class "must rise to be the leading class of the nation, must constitute itself *the* nation". Developing this point, Lenin, in 1908, wrote:

> "The fatherland, i.e. the given political, cultural, and social environment, is *the most powerful factor* in the class struggle of the proletariat (own italics). The proletariat cannot be indifferent to and unconcerned about the political, social and cultural conditions of its struggle and, consequently, cannot

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remain indifferent to the fate of its country." (Vol. 15, pp. 171-2)

Of course, Lenin made the necessary qualification regarding the need for the working class not to be led astray by abstract formulations about the defence of the fatherland, but to examine each proposition historically, only in connection with others, and only in connection with the concrete experience of history. All this notwithstanding, it is essential not to forget Lenin's point about the nation as "the most powerful factor in the class struggle of the proletariat".

No people can construct socialism in the abstract. They can only build socialism on a specific territory, and within a given framework of the historic conditions, language, culture, national psychology and economic relations of the people living on that territory.

Moreover, the building of socialism requires the widest participation of the working people. But it is only when the working people of a given country themselves determine their economic and political aims that they are able to participate consciously and actively in accomplishing them.

Respect for Sovereignty

The national question is, therefore, very much a democratic question, since it involves the rights of working people to determine their own affairs. This they cannot do completely if they suffer in any way, even to a limited degree, infringements on their national rights by another dominant nation.

As it was put in the 1961 edition of the *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism:*

> "No one can know better the requirements and potentialities of a given socialist nation than that nation itself, no one can more correctly take into consideration the specific features of its economic, political and cultural development.
>
> "That is why any interference from the outside, even if dictated by the best of intentions, can prove not only out of place, but even harmful to the building of socialism in a given country." (pp. 770-1)

Thus mutual respect for national sovereignty is a necessary condition for the development of socialism in one country or another.

Does such respect for national sovereignty hinder internationalism and hold back the process of countries drawing closer together? On the contrary, the observance of the equality and sovereignty of nations is essential precisely to ensure that they draw closer together. Only when they are really free and equal, when no nation encroaches on the independence of another, is it possible to build relations of sincere trust and so take the path of voluntary co-operation.

At the same time international solidarity and joint struggle of the international working class and democratic movement cannot be left for spontaneous growth. There needs to be a conscious and consistent effort to attain the international ideals set out in the *Communist Manifesto* which calls attention to a major distinguishing feature of communists, as follows:

> "In the national struggles of the proletarians of different countries they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat independently of all nationality."

Internationalism

The Manifesto summed up the concept of working class internationalism in the historic words: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite."

In other words, when we communists speak about working class internationalism we are not referring simply to elementary solidarity between workers of different countries during strikes, but to something quite different: "A world to win". That is to say, a recognition that the fight of each national contingent of working people for socialism is part of a world wide struggle because, as Lenin said: "Capitalist domination is international".

Today, this is more true than ever. This does not mean that a mere repetition of the historic slogan of the *Communist Manifesto* solves all problems. We live in a world which is very different from that of 1848. The necessity to adapt tactics and slogans was already evident in the post October 1917 period.

At the end of 1920, on December 6th, in a speech to Communist Party members in Moscow, Lenin recalled that at the Congress of the Communist International in Moscow he had said that the whole world was divided into oppressed and oppressing nations—the former comprising 70 per cent of the world's population. "We are really acting now", he said, "not only as representatives of the proletarians of all countries, but also as representatives of the oppressed peoples." He then referred to a new journal, and drew attention to its new slogan: "Workers of all countries and oppressed nations, unite!" He revealed that one comrade had asked: "When did the Executive Committee decide on a change of slogans?" Lenin commented: "Indeed, I cannot remember any such decision. And, of course, from the standpoint of the *Communist Manifesto* this is wrong, but then the *Communist Manifesto* was written under totally different conditions. From the standpoint of present-day politics, this slogan is correct."[1]

What Lenin said in 1920 is even more true today.

[1] V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 453.

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The world-wide anti-imperialist movement, a movement which is carried forward ever more emphatically, embraces the socialist states, the national liberation movement and the working class and its democratic allies in the capitalist states. Today internationalism requires the unity of these three powerful revolutionary streams.

National Roads

All the above considerations govern our approach to the question of national roads to socialism. The taking of national roads to the assumption of working class power and the construction of socialism is not something which is decided subjectively by individual Communist Parties. It arises naturally out of the specific struggles of the working people in each country, out of their own history and striving, out of the concrete circumstances and traditions of the given country, and is conditioned by the interplay of international factors, too. In taking its own, specific road to socialism, each working class and nation asserts its right to make its own choice, to build socialism in the forms it considers most appropriate for itself.

Naturally enough, having set out on such a road, it will also do what it can to defend the road it has taken whatever the form of interference it may face, and from whatever quarter such interference may come.

Differences and conflicts between socialist countries have a number of causes. In part they arise because of ideological differences, although primarily there are other, objective and perhaps more weighty reasons.

One factor is the different approaches and views of the ruling parties, i.e. Communist Parties, which themselves arise because of the different conditions in which they are working for socialism in their respective countries. West European countries are not yet socialist but when they reach that stage the approach they take towards building socialism, which arises from the specific conditions and traditions of developed capitalist countries, could well be a source of disagreement and tension between some of them and existing socialist countries if one is to judge on the basis of current polemics on the subject of "Eurocommunism". At present the difference is expressed in political argument, but if some of the West European countries were socialist, and the Communist Parties had a weighty position in government in those countries, there could well be tension on the State level, too.

Other Factors

Differences of view also arise because of objectively different interests of the various socialist countries, interests which at times appear to be opposed to one another. It is only proper that a Communist Party, with roots amongst its own people, with a desire to help its working people achieve a new life, with a desire to develop the national economy and the national culture as far as possible, should look after the national interest and see that it is safeguarded. This principle still pertains under conditions of socialism. There is nothing wrong about this; on the contrary, it would be strange if a Communist Party did not look after the interests of its own working people, of its own nation. The problem only arises when the interests of the working people of one nation appear to come into conflict with those of another nation.

For example, the proposed Mekong Development Project, a huge system of hydro-electric and flood control dams involving Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchea and Thailand was apparently resisted by the Pol Pot government in Kampuchea on the grounds that Vietnam and Thailand would benefit, but that Kampuchea would suffer ecological alteration and population displacement. That there should be differences of view about this project is not at all strange. I am in no position to say whether Kampuchea's criticisms were correct or not. She certainly had a right to express them, and to decide on her attitude according to her assessment of the facts. So here was an apparent conflict of interests between two socialist countries.

On a different level, but illustrating the same kind of problem, there are opposing views expressed by the French and Spanish Communist Parties concerning Spain's entry into the EEC. The French Communist Party is against, arguing that it would cause immense damage to the interests of French peasants in the south, as well as to the textile industry and sections of engineering. The Spanish Communist Party is for entry, arguing that it is in the interests of the Spanish working people. If these two Parties were key components of their respective governments, then there would clearly be an expression of this difference at the State level.

The point I am making is that genuine conflicts of interest can arise, conflicts which can involve Communist Parties being found in opposition to one another. The existence of socialist states does not rule out such problems. In fact, Lenin once said that *long after world socialism was achieved* national differences would continue to assert themselves. Experience has certainly borne this out—and this observation of Lenin's is, in a certain sense, a necessary qualification of the argument used by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* when they wrote:

> "In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonisms between classes

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within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end."

True enough in general, but in terms of the time required to achieve such a state of bliss this is possibly open to too optimistic an interpretation. It is not only that *ideas* of separate national interests cling on long after the bourgeoisie has been vanquished; but even during the building of socialism there can be differences of interest as between one socialist state and another, as we have seen only too well.

This in itself is not a tragedy. In any case, it is a fact of life. The tragedy arises when a socialist state allows its correct and natural concern to safeguard its own national interests to become distorted into an attempt to advance national claims and ambitions at the expense of another socialist state, even to the extent of backing up its aims by economic or political pressure, or even by the threat or the actual use of armed force.

The National Question

There are three other fields in which differences between socialist states can find expression.

First, there is the national question itself. Historical evolution has resulted throughout the world in contradictions between state boundaries and national formations. As a consequence problems of state frontiers sometimes arise; and furthermore, within the frontiers of a particular state there may exist a national minority whose national brothers and sisters live in substantial numbers within the state boundaries of a neighbouring state. As a consequence there can be claims and counter claims made by neighbouring states as regards territory occupied by people of similar national origin. Such problems exist in Africa, Latin America and Asia. They exist in Europe, too. Between capitalist states these questions frequently lead, naturally enough, to attempts to "solve" them by force.

Such problems can arise between socialist states, too. Leaving aside the question of South East Asia, national problems between socialist states in Europe have also found expression over the past 30 years or more. Thus, in assertion of national claims, the Soviet Union, during the second world war, incorporated Carpatho-Ukraine (or Ruthenia) which, up to then, had been part of the Czechoslovak State; a large part of the Polish State on the grounds of it being really territory of the Ukraine and Byelorussia; and adding part of what had been Romanian territory, i.e. Bessarabia, to the existing Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, claiming it as part of Moldavia. At least in the latter case, such action may well have given rise to feelings of grievance on the part of the smaller of the two States involved, thus causing an aggravation in relations between socialist states, thereby weakening their solidarity. National problems of this kind have not yet been eliminated in Eastern Europe. There is, for example, the well-known conflict between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria on the Macedonian question. There are problems, too, concerning the position of the Hungarian minority in Romania.

If we consider one or two other examples relating to countries which are not yet socialist we can see again how such problems can arise and so cut across the essential solidarity between progressive and socialist states. Thus, there has been a long-standing conflict between the Japanese Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union concerning the Japanese islands that were taken over by the Soviet Union at the end of the second world war. If, by the time Japan becomes socialist, this problem has not been solved, then there will clearly be a State problem between the two Socialist states which could give rise to acute tension. Again, we have seen the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia over the Ogaden territory, a conflict which led to war between the two States. The two states in question were led by military forces which, in both cases, stated that they were inspired by the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. We need not accept such protestations on the part of such governments, but the existence of claims and counter-claims concerning national rights and national territory could still arise when these states become socialist.

There is a similar problem as regards Morocco and Western Sahara. The people of Western Sahara, led by Polisario, are conducting an armed struggle in order to exercise what they consider is their right to self-determination and to establish their own independent state. The reactionary state of Morocco is trying to crush this national movement. Many communist parties in the world support Polisario, but the Party in Morocco itself supports its own government on this question. So again, a situation could arise in the future of a socialist government in Morocco being in conflict with a socialist government in Western Sahara.

Internal Interference

A second field of conflicts between socialist states arises when one state, for whatever reason, interferes or attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of another socialist state. There were a number of obvious examples of this in Eastern Europe after the second world war, including the instigation of the trials and mass repression, the "ex-communication" of Yugoslavia, the events connected with the return of Gomulka in 1956, and the economic policy pursued by the Soviet Union towards the East European socialist states and which was the subject of self-criticism by the Soviet Government and the Central Committee of the CPSU in their joint

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statement of 1956. Such interferences have not been confined to that period, and naturally enough they cause tension between socialist states.

Similar problems can arise when one of the States is not yet Socialist. Thus there has been a long-standing problem between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Japanese Communist Party concerning the support which has been given by the CPSU to a small, unrepresentative group around Shiga who were expelled from the Japanese Communist Party for working against Party decisions and voting in Parliament against Party policy. Fortunately, recent discussions between the two Parties indicate that this long-standing problem is near to solution.

This experience indicates that problems of interference of this sort, if they arise between Communist Parties in two Socialist countries, could lead to State differences as well.

The difficulties that arose in the case of Japan are unfortunately not confined to relations between the CPSU and the Japanese Communist Party. There have been other instances of such interference, despite the fact that documents of the International Communist Movement have called for *strict* adherence to the principles of relations between Communist Parties and Socialist States, principles which include the question of non-interference in internal affairs. When such interference is carried out by the Communist Party of one Socialist country in the internal affairs of the Communist Party of another Socialist country, State relations become strained and new difficulties arise.

Ideological Conflicts

Many of the problems dealt with above come to a head in connection with ideological conflicts which centre around two basic questions. One is the concept of what has come to be known as the "single model" of socialism; the other is the complex of ideas connected with what is known as "the primacy of the international" over the "national", or more often the "theory of limited sovereignty".

First, on the "single model". In a certain sense there is no disagreement here. Nearly 60 years ago, Lenin, in his "*Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*", advised the Communist Parties that they could only conduct a successful struggle if they took into account "*the definite peculiar features*" of the struggle in each country which arise from the specific features of its economic life, politics, culture, national composition, religious divisions and so on.

Thus Lenin set out very early on in the history of the Communist International a concept which today we refer to as taking of different national roads to socialism. This idea has also found expression in international conferences and documents, including the international conference of 1969, the Brussels Conference of West European Communist Parties in 1974, and the Berlin Conference of European Parties in 1976.

Notwithstanding the apparent theoretical acceptance of these ideas, in practice there have been difficulties. Naturally, Parties have a right to hold and express ideas about other Parties—and it is hoped that when they do so they will act with a sense of responsibility and solidarity. But to go beyond the expression of ideas, to try to exert political influence on another Party in order to change its policy or even its leading personnel, is a clear case of intervention. When such pressures are backed up by other sanctions this is still more reprehensible. When such relations begin to develop between socialist States the most acute tension can occur.

No Party and no socialist State has any right to interfere in the affairs of another. Even the claim that it is to safeguard socialism and to prevent a socialist state deserting its principles is no justification, because, in any case, who is to decide who is faithful to socialism and who is not? No Party can have special privileges, no matter how strong or experienced it may be. The idea of a leading Party or a leading socialist State is no longer acceptable in the international movement; and any attempt to impose such hegemony is bound to lead to tension and conflict.

Dealing with these problems in a recent article in *L'Unita*, Luciano Gruppi argues that not enough has been done to develop one of the key ideas of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, namely the growing differentiation of the revolutionary processes, which is "the basis for a new internationalism". He writes:

> "When a difference in political line occurs, a struggle for a determined goal becomes inevitable. This manifests itself inside parties and in the relations between parties. When this is true for States the struggle becomes inevitable. At this point the logic of the State prevails over other considerations and that hits internationalism at the foundations. Hence actual conflicts.
>
> "I speak of supremacy and the struggle for supremacy. I do not speak of imperialism, because this corresponds to a different economic structure, to the laws of the export of capital and the conquest of markets. . . ."

The most outstanding example of interference by one socialist state in the affairs of another was that of the intervention, by heavy armed action followed by direct political interference, carried out by the Soviet Union, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary and Bulgaria in Czechoslovakia in 1968/69.

I do not wish to examine this problem in detail today. In any case, time forbids. But it is relevant

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to today's discussion insofar as it illustrates how ideas of a "single model" and of the primacy of the international over the national can cause tension and eventually acute conflict between socialist states.

Voluntary Co-operation

As I have explained earlier, international solidarity between socialist states is only possible on the basis of *voluntary* co-operation, equality, independence, and non-interference. International solidarity cannot be imposed. On the contrary, internationalism demands above all that each nation, each national contingent of working people, makes its first duty that of carrying through its own socialist revolution. That is why, in the main document adopted at the international Communist conference in Moscow in 1969 one can read:

> "The winning of power by the working class and its allies is the greatest contribution which a Communist Party fighting under capitalist conditions can make to the cause of socialism and proletarian internationalism."

This brings us back again to the question of the relation of each national struggle for socialism to the common interests of all peoples striving for socialism, the relation of the national to the international.

There is no doubt that practices and habits of thought connected with the past, and especially with the Communist International, still play their part.

Dealing with this problem, Aleksandar Grlickov, head of the international department of the League of Yugoslav Communists, points out that during the period of the Comintern there was a "uniform political line, uniform strategy and tactics, democratic centralism on a world scale and monolithic unity based on the latter, as well as international class discipline".[2] As a consequence, he argues, both in theory and practice there was a strengthening of hierarchical relations between the national and the international. Priority was accorded to the international, with the national revolutionary forces reduced to being mere detachments of a unified, international organisation. The problem today, he states, is that although such a monolithic international organisation no longer exists, "basically the old theoretical model has not yet been rejected and replaced by a new one which would correspond to the newly created revolutionary conditions". Consequently, despite some adjustments, the substance of the former concepts of the relations between the national and international "still persist in present-day relationships".

My own opinion is that this presentation is too one-sided. This is not to pretend that such views which Grlickov correctly criticises do not still exist, even with considerable weight. Yet the whole trend of our times surely is that socialist states and Communist Parties are *having to* establish their relations on a new basis, that the whole of the past 35 years has been marked by strains in the international movement precisely because of the agonising, painful and often bitter striving towards and searching for a new relationship.

A New Relationship

The 7th World Congress of the CI in 1935, the dissolution of the CI in 1943, the "excommunication" of Tito and Yugoslavia in 1948, the Belgrade Declaration of 1955, the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, the Statement of the CPSU and Soviet Government in 1956, the Soviet-Yugoslav Declaration of 1958, the break with China in the early 1960s, Czechoslovakia 1968, the international Communist Conference in 1969, the emergence of new roads to socialism in developed capitalist countries in the 1970s (of which our own *British Road to Socialism* was a proud precursor in many ways), the Brussels Conference of West European Communist Parties in 1974, the Berlin Conference of all European Communist Parties in 1976, Vietnam's struggle for independence—what are these if not the birthpangs of a new pattern of relations, an attempt to establish a correct relationship between the national and the international, an attempt which is sometimes bitterly fought out because it has to be carried on often in the face of dogmatic resistance, and because it is an attempt being made in a complex world in which, despite all the differences, the communist, revolutionary and progressive forces, and especially the socialist states, have to combine their efforts against the hostility and aggressive intentions of the imperialist powers.

The Role of Imperialism

Furthermore, imperialism itself works all the time to utilise the divisions that exist between socialist states. And as long as imperialism exists there will remain the danger that differences between socialist countries will be distorted, manipulated and inflamed, even to the point of armed action by one socialist state against another.

An examination of US policy towards Vietnam, Kampuchea and China since 1945 (and even earlier) certainly bears this out. In an important survey appearing in Southeast Asia Chronicle, September-October, 1978, Lowell Finley asserts that long before the US final defeat in Saigon in 1975 a "sweeping reassessment" of US policy was underway.

"Leading the conversion," writes Finley, "were Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger and top US military leaders in the Pacific, who saw an oppor-

[2] A. Grlickov: Socialist Thought and Practice, April 1977, pp. 3-36.

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tunity to exploit the growing Sino-Soviet rift. By playing the Chinese against the Soviets, they hoped to gain greater leverage in US relations with both. They also hoped to drive a wedge between both the Soviet Union and China, on the one hand, and Vietnam on the other." He goes on to explain that a key part of this new US policy would be "US support for China against Vietnam". He adds that, "From the start, Kampuchea played a prominent role in the calculations".

In support of his argument he cites a quite extraordinary article by arch-reactionary Joseph Alsop (*Readers' Digest*, December 1975) which refers to the Vietnamese "threat" to China.

As if to prepare the US people for taking action against Vietnam, Alsop warns that unless China is able to stop Vietnam the rest of South-East Asia would be threatened "and the whole hard-won American position in the Western Pacific will begin to founder".

Alsop's article is clearly sympathetic to Kampuchea under Pol Pot and this, according to Lowell Finley, was to prepare the American people "for the mind-boggling prospect of de facto US support, via China, for communist Kampuchea against communist Vietnam". Alsop concludes the argument with these words:

> "If all this seems bewildering, it is because a wholly new political game—begun soon after the fall of Saigon—is under way in Asia."

Remember that Alsop wrote as far back as December 1975.

No one pretends that imperialism is the *cause* of differences arising abetween socialist countries; but neither should we ignore the existence of imperialism and its inevitable attempt to utilise and exaggerate such differences whenever they arise.

We have always said capitalism causes war, socialism brings peace. Do the recent conflicts between socialist countries, which have involved the use of arms, invalidate this argument? First, as far as capitalism is concerned, the whole of its epoch has been one of wars, becoming particularly destructive in the 20th century. Moreover, the main threat to peace today, the main threat to the independence of nations, and the major obstacle to complete and general disarmament, are the major capitalist states which are the driving force behind the ever-mounting arms build-up.

As for the socialist states, as long as they remain socialist and follow socialist policies in their relations with one another, the trend of their policy will be one of peace, not war. It is only when socialist principles are violated, when national chauvinism, a striving for hegemony or supremacy, begins to take over that serious conflicts arise between socialist countries.

Overcoming the Problems

In conclusion, I would like to say that although we are acting as a seminar and are not a policy-making body, it would be un-Marxist for us to limit ourselves to analysing the problems without expressing some views as to how to overcome them. We already have a set of principles governing relations between socialist states, as set out in the Soviet-Yugoslav/Belgrade document of 1955, the Statement of the CPSU and the Soviet Government in 1956, the Moscow Declaration of 1958 of the CPSU and the LCY, the main document of the 1969 international communist conference, and the document of the 1976 Berlin Conference. These princples, if implemented, provide for safeguarding the sovereign rights of each socialist state as well as their equality and independence, while ensuring non-interference and, at the same time, providing for their international solidarity.

These principles, if implemented, lay the basis for stopping interference, for reconciling conflicting state interests, for overcoming problems in the realm of nationalities and the national question.

But there is no guarantee that this will happen. On the contrary, experience shows, as Lenin predicted, that national and national-State differences will continue to assert themselves. The task is to strive to ensure that such clashes of view and/or of interest, do not lead to open conflict, to the use of arms to settle the problem, but that every possible effort be made to carry out these principles in life.

In the above-mentioned article in *L'Unita*, Luciano Gruppi asks: "What then must be done?" He goes on to suggest: "There should be a great movement in defence of peace, which affirms the right of people to their independence and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States. On this basis the solution of current conflicts can be demanded".

And he then calls on the Communist Parties in Europe to provide a "positive example of international relations and so make a contribution, which is not easy or near, to a new internationalism".

A Cautious Note

I think Gruppi is right to end on this cautious note about things being "not easy or near". As I have tried to show, the problems arise out of the soil of the revolutionary process; they are compounded of influences from the past, present-day structures, and a constant but not always clear pressing forward by each people, each nation, each state, to a new future. Amidst the welter of conflicting conceptions and conflicting interests, of misunderstandings and distortions, the common interest of working people everywhere—for peace, national liberation, democracy and socialism—increasingly asserts itself.

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We have no magic formula for solving the problems we have discussed this weekend. But we can, nevertheless, make our modest contribution not only in theory but above all, in practice, to strengthen internationalism, bearing in mind always, the advice of Marx that "only free nations are capable of fulfilling their international obligations"; and the advice of Engels that "to ensure international peace, it is necessary, in the first place, to eliminate all possible forms of national friction, and every people must be independent and master in its own country".

Discussion

Paul Fauvet

The problem with Jack Woddis's definition of a nation is that it just doesn't fit large areas of the world. The development of a common language and a common culture are included as necessary characteristics of a nation: by that definition, then, a great many of the entities seated at the United Nations aren't nations at all. And the definition is almost totally inapplicable to sub-Saharan Africa. The problem is that the national question as formulated by Marx and later by Lenin was Eurocentric. The founders of marxism were looking at Central Europe and at Poland. The very concept of "nationhood" that they were examining had been formed through the specific trajectory of European history, and particularly through European bourgeois revolutions There is no reason why that concept of nationhood should be universal.

This has obvious implications for that much-loved Leninist slogan about the "right of nations to self-determination". If "nations" as Lenin understood them are not a universal phenomenon, then their right to self-determination is unlikely to be an eternally correct political principle. The demand for self-determination for Poland or Finland in the early part of this century cannot be equated with, say, the demand for Eritrean self-determination. You are simply not comparing like with like.

Howard Smith

Existing socialist societies are no more or less than the product of their current stage of historical development, which has occurred in a real and complex global historical context. I accept as necessary to the application of Marxist theory the predominance given to the nature of the economic base in determining the broad category into which any given society is placed.

Recognition that the capacity, function and performance of the state may in practice be at variance with the historic character of the (temporarily) established economic base of a given society, requires that the term state be used to convey a precise and defined concept or element of society. If the term state is used loosely and taken as including wider concepts such as nation, people, country or even movement, instead of being confined to refer to the system of class rule, then that potential variance cannot be accommodated within one's analysis and understanding. The consequences are either the "traditional" condemnation as "not socialist" of societies whose victory over imperialism one recently celebrated, or a newer tendency to question the validity of describing as socialist any society which has not yet made great strides along the road of socialist development. I would argue that both these responses are fatalistic—the former positive and the latter negative—and do not assist a Marxist understanding of social progress. Rather our interest should be directed towards an objective analysis of the capacity of the state, in a given socialist society, to develop that society along a socialist path. If that state is seen as the instrument of the victorious class or classes, then our analysis must investigate the dynamic relationship between the state and the class or popular movement whose instrument it should be.

Interview with Nicos Poulantzas

Unfortunately, due to postal delays, Nicos Poulantzas was unable to see the finalised text of the interview before it went to press.

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